

What are joint injections and why do I need them?

Information for young people

Sometimes your joints can be swollen and painful. Most often this is because you have arthritis. Having an injection of corticosteroid and local anaesthetic medicines into the joint can help reduce the swelling and make it less sore. This information sheet from Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) explains a bit more about joint injections and what you can expect to happen when you come to the Interventional Radiology department to have them.

You have lots of different joints in your body – these help you to move. Most often, you will need joint injections in your legs and arms as they are commonly affected when you have arthritis. They can also have a bigger impact on your day to day life, like walking about or going to school.

How do they work?

You usually have an injection of two medicines mixed together into your joint. The corticosteroid medicine reduces the swelling by damping down your immune system. The local anaesthetic medicine helps to take away the pain so you get less sore from moving.

Getting ready for the injections

You will usually come for a check-up appointment before the injections. This is to make sure you are well enough for surgery and know what to expect. You will usually meet with the Clinical Nurse Specialist to talk through what will happen and you may meet the doctor at this appointment too.

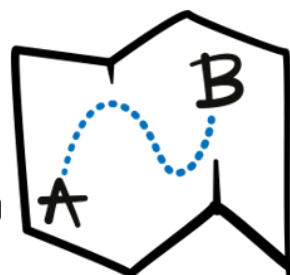
What do the injections involve?

You can have a general anaesthetic for the injections – this means you will not feel anything or know what is happening. You could have Entonox® instead – this is a mix of gas and air that you breathe in to make you relaxed and sleepy.

When you are ready, the doctor will take some x-rays of the joints that are sore. They will also inject some contrast liquid that shows up well on x-rays. When they are happy with the pictures, they will inject the mix of medicines into the joint and then put a plaster over the injection site. If you are having more than one joint treated, they will do the same again for each joint.

What could go wrong?

Joint injections are very safe as they don't involve any cuts so there is hardly any risk of bleeding or infection. Sometimes, the doctor might find it hard to inject the medicine into your joints – particularly if they are really swollen. You might need to take some medicine for a few weeks beforehand to start to reduce the swelling. Having an anaesthetic or Entonox® is very safe if you don't have any



other problems. You can feel a bit sick afterwards or have a headache but this usually doesn't last long.

What will it feel like?

You will probably feel a bit sleepy after the injections – this is due to the anaesthetic or Entonox® but will soon pass. You might feel a bit sick too – tell us so we can give you some medicine to help. It'll also help to start with small sips of water and only have something solid to eat if you're not sick.

Going home

You will usually be able to go home the same day, once you have woken up a bit and had something to drink and eat without being sick.

Getting back to normal

The place where you had the injections might feel a bit sore afterwards but this doesn't last long. It

can help to have a rest for the day afterwards but after that, you should do your exercises as the physio showed you. This will help keep the joints moving so they are more comfortable.

When will I know if the injections worked?

You probably won't notice any difference immediately but over the coming days, your joints should be less painful and easier to move. Even though they may feel better, try not to do too much – just follow the exercises your physio gave you.

Coming back to GOSH

You will usually come back to GOSH a few weeks later for a clinic appointment. The clinical team will look at your joints and see how they're moving so they can work out if the injections helped. If they were helpful, they may book some for a few months' time. If they didn't help, there are lots of other ways to make them feel better such as medicines or physio.

Further information and support

Contact your clinical team for information using MyGOSH when you have registered. For further information, please visit www.gosh.nhs.uk/your-hospital-visit/mygosh

If you have any questions about your exercises, please call the Physiotherapy department on 020 7405 9200 extension 5144. You can also contact the Physio through MyGOSH.

Disclaimer

This is a general GOSH information sheet. If you have specific questions about how this relates to you, please ask your doctor. Please note this information may not necessarily reflect treatment at other hospitals.

