

Introduction

The facet joints are the articulations between vertebral bodies that allow the vertebral column (spine) to move. Conditions such as degenerative arthritis and inflammation of the facet joints can cause pain.

The injection your doctor has requested is a mixture of local anaesthetic and steroid (an anti-inflammatory medication). The injection is intended to relieve pain by decreasing facet joint nerve activity and reduce inflammation allowing increased mobility.

A radiologist will perform the examination.

Preparation

Bring diagnostic scans to assist with locating the treatment area.

Bring a driver to take you home after examination, as you will not be allowed to drive home yourself.

On arrival, you are required to complete a consent form.

Please let us know if you take blood-thinning medication for example Aspirin, Warfarin, Debigatran or Clopidogrel, or if you have any allergies.

It is important that you tell your own doctor and staff at the radiology facility where you are having the CT if there is any chance you might be pregnant. This is important information, as it will make a difference in the way the CT is carried out or a different test altogether might be required. Your safety and that of your unborn child is the number one priority.

You will be required to change into a gown.

You may also be asked to remove your pins, chains or other items of jewellery before the examination, as these can sometimes interfere with examination.

You will lie face down on the CT examination table. The procedure is performed under sterile conditions with the skin in the area to be injected cleansed. CT imaging is used to accurately locate the area to be injected and to guide the needle. The whole test should take 20 to 30 minutes.

You may experience some soreness or bruising at the needle site and, rarely, minor muscle spasm. You may also experience temporary numbness in the area for up to 2 hours due to the extra pressure of the injection solution in your facet joint. This will affect your mobility.

Results

A radiologist (a specialist doctor) looks at the images and sends the results to your treating doctor. You need to discuss the results with your treating doctor.

Risks

The dose of radiation used in a CT scan is generally small and rarely produces harmful effects. If you have many CT scans, there is a slight increase in the lifetime risk of cancer. The small potential risk is balanced against the benefits of picking up serious injury or disease. The radiation dose will be kept as low as possible, especially if you are pregnant or very young. If you had the contrast, there is also some risk related to this (see Iodinated contrast consumer information sheet).

More Information

InsideRadiology by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists:
www.insideradiology.com.au

The Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency: www.arpansa.gov.au

ACI Radiology Network:
www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au