

TRIGGER POINT INJECTIONS

Information for patients

Dr. D Malik DFPMRCA, EDRA, MRCA, FCARCSI, DIP ANAES, MBBS
Consultant in Pain management

This information leaflet will help you to understand more about Trigger Point Injections (TPI). For any further questions or if there is anything you do not understand, please feel free to ask any of the nurses or your doctor at the Pain Clinic. You have been offered to have this injection treatment as a part of your pain management plan discussed with your consultant in the Pain Clinic.

What is a Trigger point?

This is a painful, localized muscle spasm or a tight band in the muscle. These can be felt under the skin as knots in the muscle, which may twitch when touched or pressed.

What is a Trigger point injection?

It is usually an injection of a local anaesthetic or a combination of local anaesthetic and steroid given into the painful area of the affected muscle. The injection is performed by your pain doctor to give you some relief from pain.

How will the injection be given?

This can be done in the outpatient clinic, a treatment room or a theatre suite. First, the area of your skin that is causing you pain will be exposed and your skin will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution to reduce the risk of infection. The number of injections depends upon the number of trigger points and is usually between 1 and 6.

What happens before the procedure?

Before the procedure is performed the nurse will ask you:

- If you are feeling unwell today
- If you are taking or have recently taken antibiotics for a infection (in last 4-6 weeks)
- If you are taking any regular medications to thin your blood e.g. Warfarin, Clopidogrel, Ticlopidine, Abciximab or Aspirin etc.
- If you are allergic to anything e.g. antibiotics, medications, local anaesthetics, steroids or sticky plaster
- If you are on any other regular medications
- If you have any other serious medical conditions

The doctor will take consent for the procedure and put a mark at the correct site of injection on your skin.

What will I feel during the procedure?

You may feel the needle going through your skin and some pressure when the medicine is injected. In most cases the local anaesthetic will numb the area and give some immediate relief. The doctor may ask you to tell them if you think the injection is going into the right spot where your pain is coming from. The trigger points are often massaged for a few moments after the injection.

How long will it take?

It usually takes between 10-20 minutes for the whole procedure to be performed safely, but the time period can be variable from person to person.

What happens after the injections?

After the injection the nurse will apply a dressing or spray and then help you to the take you to the recovery suite. In the recovery room we advise you to rest for at least 30 minutes. Here a nurse will monitor your pulse and blood pressure again. Some people might need to lie down for a short while.

You must not drive after the injection so you will need to arrange for someone to drive you home.

Has it got any side effects or risks?

Injections using steroids are advised not to be performed more than three times per year to avoid a potential side effects which can occur using steroids.

These include:

- An increased risk of infection at the site of injection
- Raised or low blood sugars in diabetic patients
- Changes in the menstrual period duration in women
- An increase in appetite and possible gain in weight
- Dimpling of the skin at the site of the injection

Other commonly occurring risks are:

- Temporary bleeding at the site of injection
- Temporary bruising at the site of injection
- Temporary swelling at the site of injection
- Flare up of pain
- Failure of injection
- Heaviness, numbness or tingling of the associated limb

Other risks that do not happen very often are:

- Feeling dizzy
- Infection
- Nerve or tissue damage
- An allergic reaction to the medicine

Very rare complication

- Pneumothorax (lung collapse)

What will happen after the procedure?

It is of note that these injections will not work in all the patients. If this injection relieves your pain, slowly build up your activity level. If your physiotherapist has already given you stretching exercises, please use this window of opportunity to undertake and continue these exercises and improve your fitness.

What should I do at home after the procedure?

On the day of treatment you may want to rest when you get home or you can continue as normal if you feel well enough. You should be able to drive the following day. If your pain improves then you should slowly build up your activity and exercise. However, pain is best managed by keeping active within your own limits.