ROYAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL



Southern Health



About joint injections

What is a joint injection?

A joint injection is a treatment that is used for JIA. It means that your doctor will insert a needle into a joint to remove some fluid, and then inject medicine. Most kids notice that the joint is a lot less sore and swollen within a few days after the injection. Injections can make joints feel better for weeks, months or even longer.

Why do I need a joint injection?

Joint injections reduce inflammation and pain in swollen joints. If you only have a few joints swollen they may be the only therapy you need. If you are on medicines already and still have swollen joints, joint injections may save having to increase their doses or change them.

What will happen when I get a joint injection? Before the joint injection:

- Don't eat or drink for at least two hours before an injection, including chewing gum and lollies. This is because the medicine used to help make you sleepy might make you sick if you have eaten something.
- Wear loose clothes that can be pulled up to uncover the joint(s) that need to be injected.
- A nurse will ask you some questions about your health, listen to your heart and lungs, take your temperature and blood pressure and apply some local anaesthetic cream (numbing cream) to the joints your doctor will inject..
- Your rheumatology nurse will talk to you about what will happen and help you with any worries
 you have. He/she might show you the equipment that will be used and let you play with it so you
 know how it works. He/she will talk to you and your parents about strategies you can use to help
 you feel calm and relaxed during the injection. For example, he/she might help you practice deep,
 slow breathing. He/she will also may recommend a medicine you need to help you relax during the
 injection.

Types of medicine you might have to help with the injection:

- Local anaesthetic cream (numbing cream) is a cream that is put on your skin to make it numb so you feel the injection less.
- Laughing gas (nitrous oxide) is a gas that you breathe in through a special tube/mask during the
 injection. It makes you sleepy and you will feel the injection less. If you are having laughing gas, the
 nurse will help you practice breathing through the tube before and during the injection.
- Midazolam is a liquid which you swallow half an hour before the injection. It makes you relaxed and sleepy, and might make you forget the injection afterwards. The liquid is sometimes mixed with cordial or chocolate sauce to make it taste sweet.

During the injection:

- Your mum or dad can stay with you the whole time to help you feel safe and take your mind off the injection.
- You will go into a room with a bed and some equipment. A nurse will be there to check you are OK. Your rheumatologist will do the joint injection.
- The doctor will remove your clothes from around the joint, remove the local anaesthetic cream and clean your skin with an alcohol swab or cotton ball.
- Some local anaesthetic will be injected into the skin around the swollen joint. You might feel some discomfort, but it shouldn't hurt much because of the nitrous oxide gas (laughing gas). You can also do deep breathing and talk to your parents about other things to help it hurt less.
- The doctor will pull some fluid from the joint into the syringe. The fluid is yellow. Sometimes there is a bit of blood mixed in. This is normal.
- Without taking the needle out, the doctor will take off the syringe with fluid in it and connect another syringe with medicine in it. The medicine is injected into the joint.
- Last, the doctor will inject some anaesthetic to numb the joint and stop it feeling sore after the gas wears off.
- Then the doctor will take the needle out and put a bandaid on. The whole joint injection takes about 5 minutes.
- If you need another joint injection the doctor will do it straightaway while you are still relaxed and breathing in the gas.

After the joint injection:

- You will stay at the hospital until the effects of the gas have worn off and you feel back to normal. You can then go home.
- You might feel a little bit sick after the injection. If this happens, tell the nurse or doctor and they can give you more medicine to help you feel better.
- For 24 hours after the injection you need to rest and avoid using the joint too much.
- If you develop a fever or have very bad joint pain in the injected joint(s) that does not get much better with paracetamol (Panadol) you should contact your rheumatology nurse or rheumatologist straight away.
- For three days after the injection you shouldn't do any high-impact activities like sport.

Notes