

PATIENT INFORMATION

QUESTION AND ANSWERS – INJECTION TREATMENT

Please note this should be read in conjunction with the leaflet given to you regarding specific injection treatment for you.

You have been advised to undergo injection treatment by Mr Quaile. Whilst there are very many different types of injection treatment, there are certain general principles which can be applied to all. Specific issues will be addressed during your consultation with Mr Quaile, however, if you feel at any time that you are unclear about the treatment advice please do not hesitate to discuss this with Mr Quaile, or alternatively write to us for further information.

The following represents a list of questions and answers that you may find helpful:

Q: Why have I been advised to undergo injection treatment?

A: Injections are treatment in their own right or may be used as part of a multi-disciplinary approach to the management of your chronic or acute symptoms. Injections may vary from those used diagnostically employing only local anaesthetic through a spectrum of treatments ultimately potentially to include freezing, stunning or burning a nerve(s). The exact nature of your injection will be explained to you during the course of your consultation.

Q: I understand that the injections involve steroids. Are these in any way harmful?

A: Steroid injections have been used extensively in the last 40 years to manage pain. In the past they have attracted adverse publicity due to their injudicious use in sports men or women. The dosage of steroid will be carefully limited during your procedure such that no adverse effects secondary to the use of steroids are likely. Recent research work indicates that it is quite safe to receive up to 5 separate treatments of steroids per year although it is highly unlikely that you will require procedures at such a frequency. Occasionally patients receiving steroids may experience episodes of facial flushing or intermittent elevation of temperature but no more significant side effects are generally seen.

**Q: How do injections work?**

A: Injections may work in a variety of different ways. The local anaesthetic employed may modify pain impulses transmitted along nerves to the brain on a short-term basis allowing the brain to rebuild its barriers for pain. The steroid itself may dampen down inflammatory change in nerves, joints or adjacent tissues. In the case of sciatica the injection may neutralise noxious painful substances thereby reducing pain.

Q: Are there risks associated with injection treatment?

A: The risk of a serious complication such as paralysis of a limb is quoted as being of the order of 1 in 600,000 procedures. Risks such as infection, bleeding, allergic reaction to medication and blood clots are also rare but can lead to serious consequences. There is a risk of a spinal fluid leak leading to a headache. This is treated by bedrest or by a blood patch if the headache persists. There is a risk of a total spinal block following an epidural injection which can lead to temporary breathing problems.

Minor complications are nevertheless possible. Some patients experience a short-term increase in the level of their pain following treatment which may last anything from 2 days to 2 weeks. Usually this brief exacerbation of pain can be managed very satisfactorily by simple pain killing medication. In certain procedures there is a risk of needle injury to structure such as nerves which may produce a more lasting pain although even this is unlikely to last for periods of greater than 2 to 3 months. If such a risk exists that is specific to your procedure it will be explained at the time of consultation.



**Q: How effective is injection therapy?**

A: In general two thirds of patients undergoing injection treatment will experience significant pain relief. This does not mean complete remission of pain but pain relief of greater than 50% of the original pain. In some patients injection treatment is not beneficial and occasionally where a treatment is repeated it may work on one occasion but not the other. Sometimes it requires more than one injection especially if you have had the symptoms for a considerable amount of time. Generally speaking injection therapy is more successful if combined with other treatments such as physiotherapy, osteopathic or chiropractic treatment depending on your particular problem. Sometimes it requires more than one injection especially if you have had the symptoms for a considerable amount of time.

**Q: When can I expect some benefit after my injection treatment?**

A: Most patients experience some benefit and often a feeling of wellbeing within 2 to 4 weeks following their treatment. The response is rarely instantaneous and in some cases the benefit will not be perceived for anything up to 3 months. Generally some evident improvement at 6 weeks is a good sign of a promising outcome. Treatments are now available in certain circumstances to prolong the effects of injections by stunning, burning or freezing appropriate nerves.

Q: Should I exercise afterwards?

A: We recommend a course of physiotherapy in order to maximise the benefits of your injections.

Ideally physiotherapy should commence approximately 7 to 10 days after your injections and it may be advisable to arrange this once you have a date for your injection treatment. If you are already employing the services of a particular physiotherapist, chiropractor or osteopath you may wish to continue with them. If not then we are very happy to recommend an appropriate practitioner in your area.

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We advise you to take up exercise if you have not done so before. The injections can be effective in breaking the pain cycle and allow you to rehabilitate in order to restore your health and fitness. This is very important to help restore you to a healthy life. It has been shown to minimise the chances of your back pain returning.

I hope this information enhances your understanding of the proposed treatment. Injection treatment is safe, relatively effective but not a magical cure. The aim is to set you on the road to recovery. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have further questions or concerns about your treatment.

CONTACT

Please contact us if you have any problems or questions.

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