

Trigger Point Injections

About your procedure

Trigger point injections are used to treat extremely painful areas of muscle. Normally, muscle contracts and relaxes with activity. A trigger point is a “knot” or tight band of muscle that fails to relax. The trigger point can trap or irritate surrounding nerves and may cause pain elsewhere in the body. Trigger points can be caused by strain or repetitive use injuries, stress and muscle tension, herniated discs, pinched nerves, fractures or surgical incision healing sites. Trigger points are generally in your upper and lower back muscles, but they may occur elsewhere.

Your physician will inject a preparation of a local anesthetic with or without a corticosteroid into the trigger point. The local anesthetic initially numbs the area to reduce pain, and it may wear off after two to eight hours. The corticosteroid reduces inflammation; it is not the type of steroid that builds muscles.

Relief of inflammation and pain may occur in three to four days. Maximum pain relief may take up to two weeks after the injection. You may have long-term pain relief — for weeks to months.

The injection usually takes about five minutes; however, allow one hour for your appointment.

Before the procedure

- You may eat and drink as usual, unless you are having sedation.
- If you are having sedation you need to fast for 4 hours.
- Tell your physician:
 - If you are taking anticoagulants (blood thinners), for example, Coumadin™, Plavix™, or Lovenox™.
 - If you are allergic to iodine, latex or local anesthetics.
 - If you are taking an antibiotic for an infection.
 - If you had a temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius or higher in the last two weeks.
 - If you had previous complications with cortisone injections.
 - If you have diabetes.

During the procedure

The injection may be done in an exam room, a physician’s office or in a procedure room under X-ray guidance. You may be asked to change into a gown (depending on the location of your injection site) and to use the restroom. You are fully awake during the entire procedure. Your physician will locate the tender area(s) or trigger points. The area(s) to be injected will be cleansed with alcohol or an alcohol solution. The physician will inject the area(s). You may have some discomfort during the injection. Tell your physician if you have significant discomfort; you may be given more local anesthetic.

After the procedure

You may stay in the area and rest quietly until you feel well enough to leave. For some people, this is a few minutes; for others, it can be longer.

The injected area(s) may be numb for 24 hours and the site may be sore for one to two days. You may get a bruise at the injection site.

Care following your procedure

- Rest the day of your procedure and avoid strenuous activity.
- Resume your usual diet.
- You should not drive for 24 hours after the procedure, if you have had sedation.
- If you have diabetes, corticosteroids may cause a temporary increase in your blood sugar. Monitor your blood sugar more frequently and make appropriate adjustments to your medication if you know how to do this. If you do not know how to adjust your medication, contact your primary health-care provider.
- Continue to follow your medical plan as directed by your primary health-care provider, including pain medicine, physical therapy or exercise, and any restrictions on your activity.
- You may have mild discomfort at the injection site. To relieve this discomfort, you may apply ice to the area for 15 to 20 minutes and repeat every two to four hours as needed. You may take a nonaspirin pain reliever such as acetaminophen (Tylenol™) or ibuprofen (Motrin™) in the recommended dose.
- If your injection contained a corticosteroid and you have an unrelated illness or injury, tell your health-care provider that you have recently received a corticosteroid injection.
- You may shower, but do not use a bathtub, hot tub or whirlpool for two days.
- Do not use heating pads or any other form of heat on the injection site for two days.

Complications

Complications related to the injection are rare. Call your physician if you experience any of the following:

- Dizziness
- Increased pain
- Nausea

Seek emergency medical care if you experience any of the following:

- Bleeding that does not stop after you apply ice for 10 minutes.
- Infection. Signs of infection include:
 - A temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius or higher.
 - Injection site becomes red, swollen, tender or warm.
 - Fluid drains from the injection site.
 - Injection site has an odor.
- Allergic reaction. Signs of allergic reaction include:
 - Rash.
 - Throat swelling.
 - Difficulty swallowing.
 - Wheezing or difficulty breathing.



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