Department of anaesthesia and pain medicine

Trigger point injection

What is a trigger point injection?
It is an injection of local anaesthetic (medication to numb the areas) with or without a corticosteroid (anti-inflammatory) into the affected area. A trigger point is an area of local tenderness that can be felt in the muscle. Pressing on the trigger point causes a radiating pain. Occasionally, the affected area may feel different.

Why is the injection given?
The injection is usually given to patients with muscular pain in the body, arms or legs caused by muscle spasm. The injection helps to reduce pain, improve the range of movement and mobility in the affected area, and facilitates physiotherapy. By reducing pain, we hope that you will take the opportunity to regularly perform muscle-strengthening exercises which is the best way to improve the function over the longer term.

How is the injection given?
We will ask you to come to the surgical day case unit (SDCU, department 4) and a nurse will escort you to the operating theatre. The injection can be done with you sitting up, lying on your side or on your front. During the procedure, the doctor will mark the injection site(s) and will insert needles into the affected area. He will inject a mixture of local anaesthetic and steroid.

What are the benefits of this treatment?
The aim of the trigger point injection is to disrupt the muscle spasm that is causing the pain. The injection may help to relieve pain in the affected area, but may not be 100% effective. Some patients may not get any relief at all. For some patients, the injection will help reduce the number of painkillers needed to control the pain.

What are the side effects?
There are rarely side effects following this procedure. However, you may feel bruised or sore at the site of the injection. Depending on the site of the injection, you may have a heavy feeling in the affected arm or leg due to the local anaesthetic. These feelings are normal and will wear off over about 8 hours. Very rarely local infection or accidental nerve damage can occur. In general, trigger point injections are very safe.

Can I have another trigger point injection?
For many people the injection is effective and occasionally the benefit can be long lasting for weeks or months. A small number of people have one trigger point injection and the pain disappears completely. If the injection is effective in relieving your pain and provides at least 4 weeks of pain relief, it is possible to attempt to repeat the injection after about 3 to 6 months.
Advice and precautions

• You can go home immediately after the injection and you can drive.
• You can resume your normal daily activities.
• If the injection site is sore take your regular painkillers as needed.
• Keep the dressing/plaster in place for 24 hours.
• A follow-up appointment will be made for you by the pain clinic secretary and sent to you in the post.

It is very important to tell your doctor or secretary of the pain clinic, at least a week before the injection if:

• you are allergic to any medications
• you are on blood thinning medication such as Warfarin, Nicoumalone (Sinthrome), Aspirin, Fondaparinux, Clopidogrel (Plavix)
• you have an infection at the injection site
• you have had a recent steroid / cortisone injection in the hospital or at the GP’s surgery
• you think you might be pregnant
• you are a diabetic on insulin; your blood sugar may be difficult to control for a few days tending to be high
• you have had a recent heart attack or vaccination.

Contacts
Pain secretary on 0161 446 8493

Pain team
Dr Julian Scott-Warren, consultant in pain medicine & anaesthesia
Jennifer Nuttall, pain nurse specialist
Shiji Thomas, acute pain nurse
If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

We try to ensure that all our information given to patients is accurate, balanced and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact patient.information@christie.nhs.uk

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Contact The Christie Hotline for urgent support and specialist advice

The Christie Hotline:
0161 446 3658

Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

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