

CT-guided Steroid Joint Injection

How to prepare and what to expect

This handout explains a CT-guided steroid joint injection. This treatment is done to help treat arthritis pain.

What is a CT-guided steroid joint injection?

In this treatment, *steroid* medicine is injected into a painful joint. Your radiologist will use a *computed tomography (CT)* scanner to help guide the needle into your joint. The procedure takes about 30 to 45 minutes.

A CT scanner is a large X-ray machine that is shaped like a donut. It takes pictures of the inside of your body. These pictures help a radiologist find exactly the right place to inject the steroid.



You will lie on an exam table inside the CT scanner for this procedure.

How will this injection help me?

Steroids help reduce inflammation. Your provider believes that this injection may help reduce your arthritis pain.

How does it work?

Your radiologist will use the CT scanner to help guide a small needle into your joint. Most times, a few sets of CT images are taken to make sure the needle is in the right place.

A small dose of the steroid and a numbing medicine (usually *bupivacaine*) will then be injected into your joint.

How do I prepare?

You do not need to do anything special on the day of the injection. You may eat and drink as usual.

What should I expect?

- If needed, a technologist may ask you to change into a hospital gown.
- You may also need to remove jewelry if it will affect the CT images.

- Your radiologist will explain what will happen, answer any questions you may have, talk about possible risks, and ask you to sign a consent form. It is very rare to have problems after this injection, but you could have bleeding, a bad reaction to the medicine, or an infection.
- In the CT room, the radiologist will ask you to lie on the CT exam table. They will help you get into the best position for the injection. The table will move in and out of the CT machine every time a scan is done.
- First, the radiologist will do a test scan to find the best place to do the steroid injection.
- They will then wash the skin around your joint with antiseptic. The radiologist may also inject a local *anesthetic* (numbing medicine) into the area around your joint. You may feel a pinprick and burning as they inject the anesthetic.
- After your skin is numb, they will place a needle into your joint.
- Your radiologist will then inject the steroid and numbing medicines into your joint.
- After the medicines are injected, the needle will be removed. They will place a Band-Aid on the injection site.

What happens after the injection?

You may leave the Radiology department right after your injection. You will see the disinfectant on your skin. This will easily wash off.

- **For 24 hours:** Keep the Band-Aid on the injection site. If it comes off before that time, put a new Band-Aid over the site.
- **For the rest of the day:** Do only light activity. Do not lift anything heavy.
- **For 4 hours after your injection:** Do not take a bath.

When to Call

Call the HMC Radiology Department at 206.744.3105 **right away** if you have a lot of pain, bleeding, or swelling after your injection. Ask to speak with a Radiology nurse or doctor.

How long will the pain relief last?

At first, you will feel less pain because of the numbing medicine you received. This medicine will wear off in a few hours. When it does, you will likely return to your usual pain level. It may be a few days before the steroid medicine starts to work.

Pain relief from the steroid injection can last from a few weeks to a few months. This depends on your level of arthritis.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

To schedule an appointment, call Harborview Radiology/ Imaging Services at 206.744.3105.

For other questions, call 206.744.2500.