

Hydrodissection

At UW Medicine Sports Medicine Center

This handout explains hydrodissection, a procedure to treat nerve entrapment syndromes. It tells how to prepare for the procedure and what to expect afterward.

What is hydrodissection?

Hydrodissection is a procedure to treat nerve entrapment syndromes. During the procedure, your provider injects small amounts of fluid around the nerve that is causing symptoms.

Hydrodissection is done instead of open surgery to treat the nerve problem. The provider uses ultrasound images to guide the injection.

What are nerve entrapments?

Nerve entrapments occur when there is pressure on a nerve. Scar tissue from an injury or tight muscles may be the cause. Symptoms include pain, weakness, tingling, or numbness.

When pressure pinches a nerve in one spot, the pain can move the full length of the nerve. This can make it hard to find the exact source of the problem.

Carpal tunnel syndrome is one common type of nerve entrapment.

How is hydrodissection done?

Your provider will use ultrasound to find the entrapped nerve and the best place to inject the fluid.

Next, your skin around the area is cleaned. Your skin will be treated with a numbing medicine so that you will not feel pain when the needle is inserted.



Your provider will study ultrasound images on a monitor to find the best place to inject the fluid.

The fluid that is injected is a mixture of numbing medicine and *saline* (salt water). A steroid medicine called *cortisone* may also be used.

The saline forms a short-term cushion around the nerve. This moves the scar tissue away from the nerve, letting the nerve move more freely and not be pinched for a while. If cortisone is used in the fluid, it will help calm the nerve and shrink any scar tissue in the area. The exact makeup of the solution depends on where the nerve is and what your provider feels will work best for you.

Your provider will then use ultrasound to guide the injection and watch how it works. As the fluid is injected, your provider can often see the saline fill the area around the nerve.

Your provider may also fully numb the nerve to find out if the nerve is really the cause of your pain. This is called a *diagnostic* injection.

What can I expect after the procedure?

- Over the next few days and weeks, talk with your provider about your activity level. Most people can go back to what they were doing before the injection within 48 hours.
- Some people feel relief right away. For others, it may take several weeks to feel relief.
- If your symptoms go away only partly or only short term, talk with your provider. Having another injection may give you better relief.

Can I drive myself home after the procedure?

Most people can drive after hydrodissection. But, make sure to talk with your provider about this before you schedule your procedure.

Is hydrodissection covered by insurance?

Most insurance policies cover this procedure. To make sure, ask your provider for billing information at least a few days before the procedure. Then, call your insurance company and ask about coverage.

Are there other treatment options?

Other therapies may help ease the pressure on the nerve that is causing your pain. They include:

- Physical therapy or massage therapy to help break down scar tissue and relax tight muscles.
- A brace to keep you from moving the painful area. This will reduce pinching on the nerve, but a brace can be used only on certain areas of the body.

Questions?

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

UW Medicine Sports
Medicine Center: Call
206.598.DAWG (3294) and
press 2.