

## Peripheral Nerve or Joint Injection

*Benefits, risks, how to prepare, and what to expect*

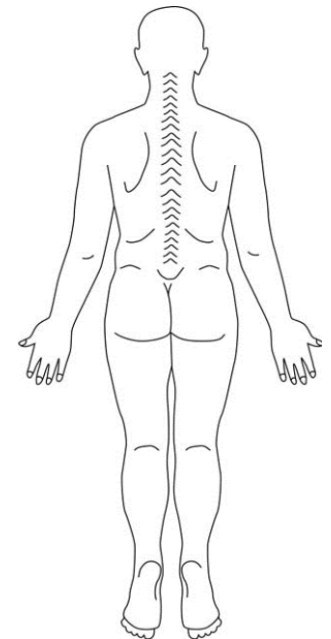
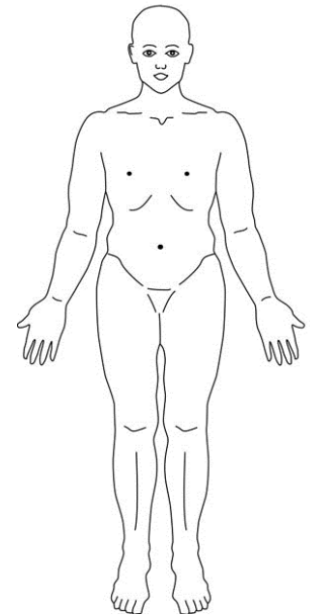
*This handout explains injections that are done to diagnose or treat pain.*

### What is a peripheral nerve or joint injection?

In these procedures, medicine is injected near a nerve or into a joint. The injections are done in the clinic.

These injections may be done to:

- **Diagnose the source of your pain.** Injecting a local *anesthetic* (numbing medicine) into an area may tell your providers if your pain starts in that area.
- **Help reduce your pain.** Injecting a *corticosteroid* (steroid) medicine may help ease pain and lessen inflammation. Your providers may prescribe a steroid injection as part of your pain control plan.



### What can I expect?

When the local anesthetic is injected, these signs will show us that the medicine is working:

- Part of your body near the injection site will feel numb.
- You will not be able to feel hot or cold in that area.
- You may feel “pins and needles” in that area.
- It will be hard to lift or move your arm or leg if you had a nerve injection.

These symptoms will go away when the local anesthetic wears off.

*Use these drawings to keep track of your pain.*

## What are the risks?

Having a peripheral nerve or joint injection may cause:

- Infection
- Bleeding
- Nerve damage
- Ongoing or increased pain

## What can I expect?

- You will lie on your stomach on an exam table.
- We will use an antiseptic solution to clean the skin on your back. Your skin may then be numbed with a local anesthetic.
- Your doctor may use ultrasound to guide the needle to the right place.
- When the needle is in place, your doctor will give you the injection.
- Your doctor will then remove the needle and place a Band-Aid on the injection site.
- Right after the injection, your pain may be gone or be much less intense than it was. This short-term pain relief is due to the local anesthetic that was used in the injection. For most people, this pain relief lasts only for a few hours.
- If you received a steroid injection as a part of your pain control plan, it may be up to 1 week before you feel longer-term pain relief.
- The injection itself takes about 5 to 15 minutes, but you will be in the clinic for at least 1 to 2 hours. This includes time for preparing before and assessments after the injection.

## Does the injection hurt?

For the injection, we will insert a needle through your skin and deep into your body tissues. You may have some minor discomfort, but it should quickly ease.

Most people handle this short procedure very well. Our clinic cannot give you *sedatives* (medicines to make you relax). If you are very nervous about having this procedure, please talk with your provider.

## How do I prepare?

To reduce your risk of bleeding, you must stop taking most blood-thinning (*anticoagulant*) medicines at some point **in the week before your injection**.

### **As soon as you schedule your injection:**

- If you are taking any of the medicines listed below, talk with your doctor who prescribed them. Ask when to stop taking:
  - Aspirin
  - Coumadin (warfarin)
  - Eliquis (apixaban)
  - Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)
  - Plavix (clopidogrel)
- Talk with your pain doctor about all of your medicines to find out what to do before your injection.

If you take low-dose aspirin or other anti-inflammatory medicines, we will tell you if you need to stop these medicines before your injection.

**Call your pain clinic 1 week before the injection** if you have not talked with your doctor about stopping your blood-thinning medicine. We may need to reschedule your injection for a later date.

### **Morning of the Injection**

- Wear loose, comfortable clothing.
- Follow your doctor's instructions about what medicine you may take before your injection.
- You may eat and drink as usual, unless your doctor has given you other instructions.
- Arrive at least 45 minutes before your appointment time for check-in.
- Plan to spend at least 2 hours at the clinic.

### **After Your Injection**

- Please do not drive or use machinery for 24 hours after your injection.
- We may ask you to keep a pain diary. Please closely follow the instructions we give you. You may want to use the drawings on page 1 to help track your pain.
- Be sure to set up follow-up visits as needed with your pain provider, primary care provider, or both.

### **When to Call**

After your injection, call one of the numbers in the "Questions" box at left if you have any of these symptoms:

- Fever higher than 100.4°F (38°C) for 2 readings by mouth, taken 4 hours apart
- Increased redness or swelling around the injection site
- Any drainage from the injection site
- Other new symptoms

#### **Questions?**

Your questions are important. Call your pain clinic if you have questions or concerns.

- Harborview Pain Clinic:** 206.744.7065
- UWMC-Roosevelt Center for Pain Relief:** 206.598.4282 (Call any time of day, 7 days a week)