Having a CT scan with therapeutic injection

This leaflet explains what happens during a CT scan with therapeutic injection in the Radiology (X-ray) Department at the Royal Berkshire Hospital. The procedure will be performed by a consultant radiologist (radiology doctor)

On the day of the scan

Please bring with your appointment letter with you (if you have it).

Either an RDA (radiographic assistant) or a radiographer (X-ray technician) will greet you in the waiting area and provide you with any information that is relevant to your examination.

Please attend alone unless you have a social or clinical need.

What is a CT scan with therapeutic injection and why do I need one?

CT stands for computerised tomography scan. It uses X-rays and a computer to create detailed images of the inside of your body. You are having this procedure to try to address the problem you have with a particular joint or area. The therapeutic steroid injection may help relieve the discomfort you have been experiencing.

Are there any risks with this test?

With any type of injection, there is a small risk of infection where the needle entered the body. The chances are remote as the procedure is done under strict sterile conditions. **As a local anaesthetic and a steroid will be injected, you must notify us of any allergies to either drug on 0118 322 8368.**

The scanner uses ionising radiation (X-rays) to produce the pictures. The scanner protocols are reviewed and optimised and the radiographers are trained to ensure the dose you receive is as low as practically possible.

What happens during the CT?

- The joint / part of the body you are having injected will dictate in which position you will need to be on the scanner table.
- The procedure will take approximately 30 minutes.
- The CT scanner consists of an X-ray tube that rotates around your body. You will usually be moved continuously through the scanner as it takes the pictures. The X-rays pass through your body and hit a series of detectors opposite the tube, which then generate the pictures via a complex computer.
- The CT allows the consultant radiologist to take pictures of the inside of your body (rather like slices in a loaf of bread) and guide the needle precisely into the correct position to inject the local anaesthetic and steroid.

- While the scanner is working, you will not feel anything. The local anaesthetic will sting initially, however that will pass quickly and numb the skin where the steroid needle will enter.
- When the steroid is injected, it is normal to experience a ‘pushing’ sensation and if it is in a joint you may feel a fullness within the joint.

Advice after the CT scan

Small joints (extremity):

- No recovery period.
- No restriction on driving.
- No need for anyone to accompany you / take you home.

Facet joint injection (back):

- Normally no recovery period.
- Injection can sometimes cause your symptoms to flare up briefly.
- The injection may cause numbness in the leg.
- It is recommended that you do not drive and have someone to drive you home.

Nerve root injection:

- Recovery period could be up to 24 hours.
- The injection is likely to cause numbness in the leg, but this should pass within the 24 hours.
- For this reason (regardless of age) legally you must not drive after the procedure, and someone must accompany you to escort you home and stay with you for 24 hours. This is in case your leg gives way and you accidentally fall and injure yourself.

Sacro-iliac joint injection:

- No recovery period.
- Injection can sometimes cause your symptoms to flare up briefly.
- It is recommended that you do not drive and have someone to drive you home.

How the steroid works

Steroids are slow acting, long-lasting drugs. The local anaesthetic may ease your symptoms in the short term. However, as a result of the injection, you may experience a flare up of your symptoms for 24 to 48 hours.

The steroid may take several weeks to start working. Depending on your condition, there is no guarantee that this procedure will ease the pain. Any pain you experience may even be coming from an area different to that which was treated). If the steroid helps, the length of time it lasts is variable.

Follow-up

You will often receive a follow up appointment in the clinic with the doctor who referred you for the examination approximately 6-8 weeks after the procedure. This period is to give the steroid a chance to work.

Further information

https://www.nhs.uk/tests-and-treatments/ct-scan/

Contacting us

Radiology Department Tel 0118 322 7991

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

RAD_0059
Radiology Department, November 2026
Next review due: November 2028