Diagnostic injections

Discogram
A discogram views and assesses the internal structure of a disc and determines if it is the source of your pain. A needle is placed into the discs in your spine and contrast is injected to duplicate or elicit the pain symptoms. Occasionally, a CT exam will be performed following the injection.

Nerve Root Block
This procedure determines if a specific inflamed spinal nerve is the source of your pain. A needle is placed close to the suspected nerve and a small amount of anesthetic is injected to see if it reduces your pain symptoms.

Vertebroplasty
Vertebroplasty is an image-guided, minimally-invasive non-surgical therapy used to treat painful compression fractures in the spine by injecting a cement-like substance into the bone.

To determine if you are a candidate for this procedure, you will have an MRI or CT scan of the spine. A subspecialty radiologist reviews the images from the scan, verifying the age and location of the fracture. Next, you will have a consultation with a radiology healthcare provider and be examined under fluoroscopy to determine if the fracture is the cause of your back pain.

If you are an appropriate candidate, your procedure will be scheduled at one of our affiliated hospitals, depending on the location of your consultation.

For detailed directions, visit our website: www.suburbanimaging.com
What are Injections?

Injections fall into two categories – diagnostic and therapeutic. Diagnostic injections result in additional knowledge about your condition and finding the source of your pain. Therapeutic injections can result in pain relief that lasts a few hours or permanently.

Injections are image-guided, which means that imaging equipment called fluoroscopy (a type of low-dose x-ray) is used to clearly view the area in real time, on a video monitor. This ensures exact placement of the needle during the procedure.

Injections are under the direct supervision of a subspecialty board-certified radiologist, a doctor who has extensive training and expertise in medical imaging and injections.

How you should prepare

- If you have an active infection and are taking antibiotics, the medication must be complete prior to the procedure.
- Inform us if you are or may be pregnant, or have allergies to medications or x-ray dye (contrast).
- Arrive 15 minutes early to complete registration.
- Bring your insurance card and a valid photo ID.

Depending on the injection procedure you are having, the following preps may also apply:

- Do not eat solid food 2 hours prior to your appointment.
- You may need someone to drive you home.
- If you are taking blood thinners (Coumadin, Plavix, Ticlid, etc.), you may have to hold the medication prior to the procedure. Contact your healthcare provider before stopping any medication to determine if it is safe for you.

After your procedure

A summary of the procedure and results will be sent to your healthcare provider.

You can resume normal activities the next day, but for the next 24 hours avoid driving, rigorous activity and alcohol consumption. You may feel soreness at the needle insertion site for two to three days; you can use an ice pack to relieve any discomfort, up to 15 minutes per hour.

As with any procedure involving a needle, there is a small chance of infection or bleeding. Rarely, there could be neural injury, headache, temporary numbness, weakness or facial flushing.

What happens during your procedure

You will lie on an x-ray table on your stomach or back, depending on the area to be injected. The area will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution, and a local anesthetic will be applied to numb the area where the needle will be inserted.

After the needle is placed, contrast material is injected to confirm that the needle is in the correct location. Some patients feel a slight pressure sensation or discomfort as the contrast is injected. This is temporary and will gradually dissipate within a short time after the procedure.

Depending on the type of procedure you’re having, the injection may contain one or both of the following:

- Anesthetic, which helps give immediate pain relief.
- Steroid preparation, which may be effective in long-term control of your symptoms.

When the procedure is complete, you will be observed for a short time.

Therapeutic injections

Therapeutic procedures result in pain relief by delivering medication to the source of your pain. One of many possible causes of pain is inflammation. Steroids are injected to reduce inflammation and ease the pain.

Epidural Steroid Injection

This procedure is performed for spinal degeneration, spinal stenosis (narrowing) and/or disc herniation. The injection is administered into the space surrounding the nerves in the spinal canal (called the epidural space); it can be performed on all areas of the spine – the cervical (upper), thoracic (mid) or lumbar (low) areas.

Facet or Sacroiliac Joint Injection

Facet joints are located on the back of the spine on each side where one vertebra slightly overlaps the adjacent vertebra; they guide and restrict movement of the spine. A sacroiliac joint is the space between the spine and pelvis. A facet or sacroiliac joint space will be injected with a combination of anesthetic and steroid.

Trigger Point Injection

Trigger points are tight knots of muscle that won’t relax. After palpating the area, a steroid preparation will be injected into the knot to relieve the pain.

Joint Injection

Joint injections can be performed on any joint, such as the shoulder, elbow, wrist, hip, knee or ankle. A combination of anesthetic and steroid will be injected.

Podiatry Injections

The foot and ankle are common locations for overuse or traumatic injuries. This is often associated with chronic pain and inflammation. These symptoms can be treated with localized targeted injections of an anesthetic and a steroid, resulting in pain relief and improved mobility.

Diagnostic injections

Diagnostic procedures determine the source of your pain and result in additional information about the potential cause of the symptoms.

Myelogram

This type of procedure can detect abnormalities such as a tumor, herniated disc or arthritis, spinal narrowing and/or nerve impingement of the spinal canal. A needle is placed into the fluid space around the nerves in your back and contrast is injected. X-ray images are taken and a CT scan is then performed to add detailed anatomic information.

In order to minimize the risk of a post-myelogram headache, it is recommended that you lie down, with your head slightly elevated, for the remainder of the day.

Arthrogram

An arthrogram is a two-part procedure performed to aid in the diagnosis of subtle abnormalities in the joints of the extremities, such as the shoulder, elbow, wrist, hip, knee and ankle.

During the first portion of an arthrogram, contrast is injected into the joint space with a needle under x-ray guidance. Next, you will have an MRI or CT scan to take additional images of the joint.