

Trigger Point Injections

What is a trigger point?

It is a specific point of pain that you are aware of either by yourself or when examined. It may be noticed as a knot or tight band of muscle. It is felt under the skin and may twitch when touched or needled. It can irritate nerves and cause pain. Scar tissue, loss of movement and weakness may develop over time.

What is a trigger point injection (TPI)?

Local anaesthetic is injected into painful point, into the muscle. The injection and medicine helps the muscle contract and relax relieving pain. It is used to treat chronic muscle pain.

Other therapies are often used before trigger point injections

Muscles in the arms, legs, low back and neck may be treated with exercise, stretching massage and physiotherapy.

What can I expect during a trigger point injection?

Your doctor will ask you where it hurts most. The needle will be inserted into that point. Numbing medicine (local anaesthetic with or without steroid) will be injected. The medicine will help the trigger point relax, a muscle twitch often occurs. The tissue becomes less inflamed and you will have less pain.

What can I expect after the injection?

Numbness from the local anaesthetic may last 1-2 hours. You may have a twitch or pain lasting a few seconds or minutes. You may get a bruise at the injection site. Some people have increased pain at the injection site for 1-2 days. Your blood sugar may increase for 1-3 days if steroids have been injected. You will be given stretching exercises. Occasionally there is no relief.

Risks and complications.

There is a small chance of bleeding, infection, tissue damage, nerve injury and risk of puncturing the lung when injections are done near the rib cage.

Who should not have the procedure?

You are allergic to any of the medicines, you have an infection in the area or you have an injury in the area to be injected.

How often may I have a trigger point injection?

TPI can be done 3-6 times per year so long as you obtain pain relief and use this to improve your exercise and mobility.

What do I do next?

*TPI is aimed at reducing your pain, to increase the range of pain free movement and allow a graded exercise program (eg 10,000 step walking program). **TPI alone without stretching and exercise is not much use** and you need to work hard at improving your exercise level and mobility for any benefits to be gained.*