

Diagnostic spinal injection

What is a diagnostic spinal injection?

This is an injection that is designed to identify the source of pain in the cervical or lumbar spine. There are many structures in the spine that may be responsible for your pain symptoms. This injection is specifically designed to identify pain from arthritic facet joints.

Patients should understand that this procedure is diagnostic in nature, and that the amount of pain relief is widely variable and may span from minimal reduction in symptoms to almost complete elimination of pain. Additionally, pain relief may be only several hours. However, this procedure is not specifically designed to provide long lasting pain relief, but is designed to identify pain from arthritis.

How does a diagnostic spinal injection relieve my pain?

Arthritis represents inflammation in the joints of the spine. Pain impulses are transmitted via small nerves to the spinal cord, then to the brain where pain is experienced. The injection specifically blocks these pain impulses, thereby reducing the sensation of pain. Medications used include Lidocaine which is a local anesthetic, and Kenalog which is a potent anti-inflammatory drug. These medications have a long record of safety and effectiveness.

What can I expect during the procedure?

After checking in at the Surgery Center, you will be interviewed by the admission nurse who will take a full history. If the injection is in the cervical region, an IV will be started. You will also be seen by the medical staff of the Arizona Pain Clinic prior to the procedure, at which time you will have the opportunity to ask additional questions concerning the procedure. You will also be asked to fill out a pain diagram indicating the location and intensity of your symptoms.

It is important that you understand that intravenous sedation is generally NOT used for these procedures. If sedation is used, it may cause you to give an incorrect response regarding the effectiveness of the injections. Following the procedure, you will be allowed to rest for approximately 30 minutes in the recovery area prior to discharge. You will also fill out a post-procedural pain diagram. You must have a responsible adult take you home.

When will I begin to feel pain relief and how long will it last?

If these injections are effective for reducing your pain, you will probably begin to feel this reduction within 10 minutes. If you get good pain relief from the procedure, don't be disappointed if the pain returns relatively soon. Remember, these are diagnostic injections designed to identify the source of your discomfort. Future treatment options will be discussed with you by the medical staff.

What is the anticipated recovery from the procedure?

The recovery from the procedure is short. You may have minor discomfort at the injection site which usually resolves within 24 hours. If you continue to have symptoms, please refer to Surgery Center discharge instructions. You also may call the Arizona Pain Clinic if there are any concerns.



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