



## **PATIENT TEACHING HANDOUT**

### **Intra-articular Joint and Bursa Injections**

#### *What is an intra-articular joint or bursa injection?*

It is the placement of corticosteroid and local anesthetic medications through a needle into a joint space or bursa ("fluid filled sac") of the arm or leg. Common sites of injection are the shoulder, knee, hip, elbow, ankle, foot and fingers

#### *What are the goals of an intra-articular joint or bursa injection?*

- to reduce and possibly eliminate pain,
- to increase function, and
- to possibly eliminate or prolong the need for surgery.

#### *How can these injections help my condition?*

Corticosteroids (such as methylprednisolone) are typically used. They are anti-inflammatory agents that slow down the accumulation of cells responsible for producing inflammation and pain within the joint space or bursa. They may be given to treat conditions such as osteoarthritis, bursitis, tendonitis, rheumatoid arthritis and gout.

#### *How do I prepare for an intra-articular joint or bursa injection?*

- If you are taking any anticoagulant ("blood thinner") medication, tell your doctor before scheduling the procedure. If it is decided by the doctor that you may continue these medications, lab tests will be required before the injection.
- You are not permitted to drive after your procedure. You must have someone to drive you home.
- Please discuss with the doctor your use of Aspirin-containing products and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil), or naproxen (Aleve) before scheduling the procedure.
- You may eat and drink before your procedure.

#### *What happens during an intra-articular joint or bursa injection?*

- You will be placed either in seated or laying (face up) position on the procedure table.
- The area for the injection will be washed with an antiseptic solution and covered with sterile drapes.
- The doctor will inject local anesthetic to numb the injection site. You will remain awake for the procedure.
- An X-ray machine (fluoroscopy) or ultrasound machine may be used to guide placement of the injection.
- Once in the appropriate location, medication will be delivered through the needle into the joint or bursa by your doctor.

#### *How long is the procedure?*

The entire procedure takes about 5-10 minutes to perform.

#### *What happens after the procedure?*

- The steroid medication takes 48 – 72 hours after your procedure to begin working.
- You may continue taking regularly scheduled medications.
- The day after your procedure, you may resume normal daily activities.
- You may have pain and soreness for 2-3 days after the procedure. Use ice to alleviate the soreness.
- An uncommon complication is a post-injection flare, which is joint swelling and pain several hours after the corticosteroid injection. This occurs in approximately 1 out of 50 patients and usually subsides within several days.
- You will be instructed to call Pittsburgh Pain Physicians 1 week later with an update on your pain relief.

Please call Pittsburgh Pain Physicians if you notice any of the following: increased pain, swelling, redness, fever, or worsening weakness in your arms or legs. If you are diabetic, your blood sugar may increase slightly after the procedure for a short period. Diabetic patients should monitor their blood sugar closely for 5 days following the procedure.

If you have any questions or concerns about this procedure please call Pittsburgh Pain Physicians at **412-533-2202**.

