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What is the hip joint and why is a hip joint injection helpful?

The hip joint is a large joint where the leg joins the pelvis. If the joint becomes painful due to arthritis, labral injury or mechanical stress it may cause pain in your hip, buttock or leg.

A hip joint injection serves several purposes. First, by placing numbing medication into the joint, the amount of immediate pain relief you experience will help confirm or deny the joint as a source of your pain. That is, if you obtain complete relief of your main pain while your joint is numb, it means this joint is likely your pain source. Furthermore, time-release cortisone will be injected into this joint to reduce any inflammation. This can, on many occasions, provide long-term pain relief.

What will happen to me during the procedure?

If desired, an IV will be started so that relaxation medication can be given. After lying on an x-ray table, the skin over your hip will be well cleansed. Next, the physician will numb a small area of skin with numbing medication (anesthetic) which stings for a few seconds. The physician will then use x-ray guidance to direct a very small needle into the joint. He will then inject several drops of contrast dye to confirm that the medicine only goes into the joint. A small mixture of numbing medication (anesthetic) and anti-inflammatory cortisone will then be slowly injected.

What should I do and expect after the procedure?

20-30 minutes after the procedure you will move your hip to try to provoke your usual pain. You will report your remaining pain (if any) and the relief you experience during the next week on a "pain diary" we will provide. You may or may not obtain improvement in the first few hours after the injection, depending upon if the hip joint that was injected was your main pain source. Mail or fax the completed pain diary back as directed so that your treating physician can be informed of your results and plan future tests and/or treatment if needed.

On occasion, you may feel numb or slightly weak with an odd feeling in your leg for a few hours after the injection. You may notice a slight increase in your pain lasting for several days as the numbing medication wears off before the cortisone is effective. Ice will typically be more helpful than heat in the first 2-3 days after the injection. You may begin to notice an improvement in your pain 2-5 days after the injection. If you do not notice improvement within 10 days after the injection, it is unlikely to occur. You may take your regular medications after the procedure, but try to limit pain medications for the first 4-6 hours after the procedure, so that the diagnostic information obtained from the procedure is accurate.

On the day of the injection, you should not drive and should avoid any strenuous activities. On the day after the procedure, you may return to your regular activities. When your pain is improved, start your regular exercise in moderation. Even if your pain significantly improves, gradually increase your activities over 1-2 weeks to avoid recurrence of your pain.