



Trigger Point Injection under Ultrasound for Pain Management

Patient Information Leaflet

16.10.2025

Understanding Your Treatment Options

This leaflet provides information about the treatments that might be considered for managing pain. While they aim to relieve pain, they work in different ways and are suitable for different situations.

What is a Trigger Point?

A *trigger point* is a small, tight band of muscle that can feel like a “knot.” It may cause local pain or pain that spreads to other areas. Trigger point injections can help relieve this pain.

- A **trigger point** is a small, tight band of muscle fibers that remain contracted instead of relaxing.
- They are often felt as “knots” under the skin, tender to touch.
- They can irritate nearby nerves and cause **referred pain** (pain felt in a different location). Eg Trapezius muscle trigger point pain can be experienced as headache, head and neck pain or shoulder pain.
- Common sites:
 - Neck (trapezius, sternocleidomastoid)
 - Shoulders
 - Lower back (erector spinae, quadratus lumborum)
 - Hips and thighs

Indications (Why this procedure may be recommended)

Trigger point injections may be used if you have:

- Muscle pain that does not improve with rest, stretching, or physical therapy.
- Pain from muscle knots in areas such as the neck, shoulders, back, or hips.
- Conditions such as:
 - Myofascial pain syndrome
 - Tension-type headaches
 - Fibromyalgia (in some cases)

Medications Used

The injection may include:

- **Local anaesthetic** (e.g., lidocaine) – numbs the area.
- **Corticosteroid** (sometimes) – to help to reduce inflammation.
- **Saline** to release the scar tissue around the muscle fibres and the trigger point.

Advantages of using ultrasound for injections:

- Helps the doctor see the muscle layers and locate the trigger point more accurately.
- Ensures the needle is placed precisely in the affected muscle.
- Safer and more accurate than “blind” injections.
- Less discomfort and fewer needle passes.
- Useful for deeper muscles or complex cases.

Before the Procedure

- Tell your doctor about all medications you are taking, especially blood thinners, diabetes medications, or if you are allergic to any drugs.
- Inform your doctor if you are pregnant, breastfeeding, or have an infection.
- You may eat and drink normally unless advised otherwise.
- Arrange for someone to drive you home if you are receiving any sedation (though sedation is not usually needed)

During the Procedure: Steps (what happens during the procedure):

- You will sit or lie in a comfortable position.
- The area of pain is identified by pressing on the muscle.
- The skin will be cleaned with antiseptic.
- An ultrasound probe with gel is placed on the skin.
- The trigger point appears on the screen as a taut muscle band or area of reduced movement.
- The doctor guides a thin needle into the trigger point under ultrasound view.
- Local anaesthetic (and sometimes corticosteroid or saline) is injected.
- You may feel pressure, twitching, or brief discomfort and this is a normal response.
- The procedure usually takes only a few minutes.

After the Procedure (Post-Care)

- You may feel immediate relief due to the local anaesthetic.
- Mild soreness or bruising at the injection site can occur; applying ice may help.
- Avoid strenuous activity on the day of the injection.
- You can return to normal activities the following day unless told otherwise.
- Continue with stretching and physical therapy if recommended.

Benefits of trigger point injections

- Relief from muscle pain and tightness.
- Improved movement and function.
- Can be repeated if necessary.
- May reduce the need for oral pain medications.

Risks and Side Effects

Most people tolerate trigger point injections well. Possible risks include:

- Temporary increase in pain, bruising, or bleeding at the injection site.
- Infection (rare).
- Allergic reaction to medication (rare).
- Temporary dizziness or numbness near the injection area.
- If steroids are used: possible side effects such as facial flushing or temporary changes in blood sugar.

When to Contact Your Doctor or attend A&E?

Call your healthcare provider if you notice:

- Increasing redness, swelling, or warmth at the injection site.
- Fever or chills.
- Severe or persistent pain.
- Allergic reactions such as rash, itching, or difficulty breathing (seek emergency help)

Are there any alternative treatments?

Alternative treatments may include the following in isolation or combined together.

- Self management through lifestyle modifications
- Different medications as tolerated
- Use of a TENS machine / Physiotherapy/Application of heat or cold/ massage/exercises
- Attending a Pain Management Programme.
- Stress management programmes.

Your doctor will discuss other options with you.

Summary: Trigger point injections are a safe and effective option for managing painful muscle knots. They work best when combined with physical therapy, stretching, and healthy lifestyle habits.

More general information given by the Faculty of Pain Medicine regarding injection and nerve blocks can also be found here

[General Information - injection treatments](#)