PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Trigger Point Injections

This information will help you get ready for your trigger point injection (shot).

About Trigger Points

A trigger point is a knot in your muscle that doesn’t relax and is very sensitive to touch. Trigger points can also cause muscle spasms (twitches) or a feeling of tightness. When pressure is applied to the trigger point, you will feel some pain in that area. You may also feel some pain in another part of your body. This is called the target zone.

Common areas that have trigger points are the muscles in your:

- Buttocks
- Upper back
- Lower back
- Neck

Common causes of trigger points are:

- An injury
- Strain from everyday activities
The way that you move (body mechanics)

About Trigger Point Injections

A trigger point injection is used to treat a trigger point in your muscle. The numbing medication in a trigger point injection can help relieve some of your pain. The act of inserting the needle into your muscle may also help break up the knot and relieve spasms and the feeling of tightness. This will make you feel better and make it easier for you to move and exercise.

Before getting a trigger point injection, tell your doctor if you:

- Have an allergy to latex or lidocaine.
- Have an infection near the area where the shot will be given.
- Take a blood thinner medication (medication that affects the way your blood clots). Some examples of these medications are:

  - apixaban (Eliquis®)
  - aspirin
  - clopidogrel (Plavix®)
  - enoxaparin (Lovenox®)
  - heparin
  - tinzaparin (Innohep®)
  - warfarin (Coumadin®)

Getting a Trigger Point Injection

A trigger point injection is quick and simple. Your doctor will find the trigger point by feeling around the area that hurts. Once they find the trigger point, your doctor will clean and mark your skin where the shot will be given.
Then, your doctor will inject a small amount of numbing medication into the trigger point. You should only feel some pinching as the needle is put through your skin. Your doctor may massage the area to help the medication get into the entire area around the trigger point.

**After Your Trigger Point Injection**

- Your pain should get better after getting a trigger point injection.

- Your doctor may recommend that you see an occupational or physical therapist. The therapist will show you how to do exercises that can reduce muscle strain.

- Your doctor may also suggest that you use an assistive device to keep you from straining the muscles in the area with the trigger point. It may also make it easier for you to perform tasks.
  
  - If you need an assistive device, your physical or occupational therapist will show you how to use it. Some examples of assistive devices are:

    | A cane       | A brace          |
    |--------------|------------------|
    | A walker     | A cervical collar|
    | A splint     | A raised toilet seat|

- You should rest the area for 1 to 2 days after your injection. Avoid activities that may cause strain, such as:
  
  - Standing for long periods of time
○ Jogging and other strenuous exercises
○ Lifting heavy objects
• Don’t use heating pads or warm packs for 1 to 2 days after your injection. The increased heat can cause bleeding.

When to Call Your Doctor or Nurse

Call your doctor or nurse if you have

• Have a fever of 100.4° F (38° C) or higher
• Have any of the following around the area where you got the injection:
  ○ Increased pain, swelling, tenderness, or redness
  ○ Skin irritation
  ○ Warmth, burning, or itching
• Develop any new or unexplained symptoms
• Have any questions or concerns

If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.