INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Plantar fascia injection

Aim
As part of your treatment for heel pain, it has been suggested that you may benefit from a plantar fascia injection. It is difficult to say how much this treatment may help your pain.

This leaflet aims to explain the procedure and answer any queries you may have.

What is a plantar fascia injection?
The plantar fascia is a ligament which runs from under the heel to the front of the foot.

Injections can ease pain or discomfort and help you move about and exercise. This will help to strengthen your ligaments and muscles.

What do I need to do prior to the procedure?
You may take all medication as normal before the injection.

If you are taking blood thinning drugs, eg Warfarin, you must inform us and bring your monitoring book showing your most recent INR result. You should also arrange a repeat INR blood test three days after the injection.

There is no preparation for this procedure. You may eat and drink as normal. You will sign a consent form prior to the procedure.

How is the injection performed?
The injection is given into the heel around the plantar fascia.

Your skin will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution prior to the injection.

The injection is often performed using ultrasound. Ultrasound helps the doctor to see exactly where the needle should be placed.

The injection consists of a steroid and a local anaesthetic (lidocaine and chirocaine).

A dressing will be applied to the injection site, which can be removed the day after the injection.

What are the benefits from the injection?
The local anaesthetic may give you almost instant relief from your pain. This will last for one to two hours. The steroid will take longer to ease your pain and you may not feel the benefit for a day or two. You may take pain relief, eg paracetamol, or use ice packs during this time.

Most people get some benefit but the injection may only bring temporary relief. It can be repeated a maximum of three times per year.
What are the risks from the procedure?
Generally, the plantar fascia injection is a safe procedure. You will experience some discomfort, but the anaesthetic in the injection will help.

A few patients may notice that their symptoms worsen initially, but this should settle within couple of days.

The skin at the injection site may change colour (depigmentation). This may take a while to fade or may even be a permanent effect.

Female patients may experience a change in their menstrual cycle following the injection. If this doesn’t return to normal within a couple of months, please seek advice from your doctor.

Very rarely there is a softening of the heel pad, making walking uncomfortable.

Very rarely the plantar fascia can rupture.

The procedure is performed under sterile conditions so the risk of infection is minimised (1 in 20,000).

Signs of infection are a high temperature and the heel becoming more painful, swollen, hot or red. Please seek treatment from your GP or attend the Emergency Department if you experience any of these symptoms.

On very rare occasions the patient may have an allergic reaction to the steroid or anaesthetic. There may be a rash at the injection site, perhaps with swelling of the face and you may have difficulty breathing.

If this happens you will be treated immediately.

If you experience any of these symptoms when you get home, you should come to the Emergency Department. It is very rare for this to occur.

What happens afterwards?
Once we are sure you are feeling well then you will be allowed home.

It is important that you do not drive for at least four hours following this procedure. Please arrange for someone to collect you.

What should I do when I get home?
You should rest as much as possible for the first 48 hours to protect against rupturing the plantar fascia.

There is no need to keep the injection site dry, you may bath or shower as normal.

Do not do stretching exercises for the first 48 hours.

You may find that you have heel pain after 48 hours when the anaesthetic has worn off and the steroid has not reached the maximum effect.

You may resume normal activity after 48 hours.

You will be given a programme of stretching exercises which should be followed.

The use of footwear with a built-in arch will prevent recurrence of your pain.
What if I suffer from diabetes?
If you suffer from diabetes the steroid can cause your blood sugar to rise.

You will need to check your blood more often for a week after the injection and you may need to increase your insulin. Please contact your diabetes specialist if you need further advice.

Contact details
If you require further information before your appointment date you may contact the x-ray department on 01623 672202 between 9am and 5pm.

Further sources of information
Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them. Stating a web address does not imply we endorse a particular site. Neither does not stating a web address imply lack of endorsement.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)
The PALS team is available to help with any of your comments, compliments or concerns and will ensure a prompt and efficient service. Contact details:

- King's Mill Hospital 01623 672222
  (out of hours answer phone)
  Email: Pals.kmh@sfh-tr.nhs.uk

- Newark Hospital 01636 685692
  (out of hours answer phone)
  Email: Pals.nwk@sfh-tr.nhs.uk

If you need this information in a different language or format, please contact PALS, as above.

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