

# ASCENSION ST VINCENTS

## JOINT PROCEDURE PATIENT HANDOUT

### Radiologist who performed your procedure:

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### Procedure Description:

- An image-guided joint injection/aspiration is a procedure used to help diagnose or treat joint problems. During the procedure, a radiologist uses imaging to precisely target the joint. The skin is cleaned with antiseptic, and local anesthetic is used to numb the area. A small needle is inserted into the joint.
- For a joint steroid injection, a mixture of steroid, long-acting anesthetic and CT contrast will be injected into the joint.
- For a joint arthrogram, a mixture of CT contrast and long-acting anesthetic will be injected into the joint. MRI contrast will also be injected for MRI arthrograms. CT or MRI imaging will follow the injection.
- For a joint aspiration, an attempt will be made to remove fluid from the joint. A joint does not always have fluid that can be removed.
- The procedure itself usually takes 10-15 minutes. CT or MRI arthrogram imaging takes additional time.

### Benefits:

- Minimally invasive: The procedure uses small needles with no incisions or stitches.
- Improved accuracy: The use of imaging helps the radiologist place the needle precisely into the joint.
- Better results: For patients undergoing steroid injection, accurate needle placement into the joint means the medications are more likely to provide relief.
- Diagnostic value: For patients undergoing joint aspiration, any fluid removed is sent for testing to help diagnose conditions like infection, gout and arthritis.
- Low risk of complications: The risk of serious complications is low, with most side effects being mild and temporary.
- Rapid recovery: Most patients return to normal activities soon after the procedure.

### Risks & Potential Complications:

- Pain: Pain can occur (up to 5% of cases). The pain is usually mild, usually goes away within a few days and can be managed with over-the-counter pain medicine.
- Bruising/bleeding: Minor bruising or bleeding can occur (up to 3% of cases). The bruising/bleeding usually goes away over several days. Bleeding inside the joint is very rare (less than 0.1% of cases).
- Infection: Infection is rare (less than 0.2% of cases). Most infections are mild and can be treated with antibiotics.
- Vasovagal reaction: Feeling faint or lightheaded can occur during or after the procedure (up to 7% of cases). It is usually mild and goes away quickly.
- Increased pain/swelling: Some patients (up to 5% of cases) who receive steroids may notice increased pain and swelling in the joint for a few days after the procedure. This is called a "steroid flare" and usually goes away without treatment.

- Allergic reaction: A reaction to the local anesthetic, topical antiseptic or other medications is rare (less than 1% of cases).
- Nerve irritation/injury: Nerve irritation/injury causing temporary numbness or weakness is rare (less than 0.2% of cases).
- Serious complications: Serious complications are rare (less than 0.01%).
- Skin changes: Skin thinning or color changes can happen with steroid injections, however this is uncommon and usually mild.
- Repeated steroid injections may increase the risk of tendon rupture or cartilage damage (especially if injections occur too often).

### **Alternatives:**

- Observation only.
- Joint aspiration or injection performed without imaging guidance.
- Physical therapy or exercise programs.
- Oral or topical pain medications.
- Surgical options (such as arthroscopy or joint replacement) if symptoms are severe and do not improve with less invasive measures.

### **Aftercare:**

- A bandage will be applied over the procedure site. You may remove the bandage 24 hours after your procedure.
- If you were provided with an ice pack, apply it to the site periodically for 15-30 minutes after your procedure.
- You may shower and allow water to flow over the site 24 hours after your procedure, however, do not submerge the site in water (bath, pool, hot tub or ocean) until the site has healed.
- Do not apply lotion/ointment to the site until it has healed unless you are instructed to do so.
- Avoid strenuous physical activity for at least 24 hours after your procedure. Then increase your activity level as tolerated.
- It is normal to experience mild pain and bruising after your procedure. You can take acetaminophen (Tylenol), aspirin, ibuprofen (Motrin) or naproxen (Aleve) for relief. It is safe to take aspirin, ibuprofen or naproxen soon after your procedure, however you may experience more bruising if you do so.
- For patients receiving a steroid injection, it is not uncommon for the joint pain to improve immediately after the procedure for several hours then worsen for 1-2 days before improving again. It can take 1-2 days after the injected anesthetic wears off before the steroid takes effect.
- Some joints have nerves nearby. Local anesthetic can occasionally flow over these nerves and cause numbness/weakness, which can take up to several hours to go away.
- Contact Radiology or your ordering clinician if you have any concerns or experience any of the following: persistent or significant bleeding, significant swelling, severe pain not responding to over-the-counter medications, signs of possible infection (significant redness or purulent drainage at the site, severe pain, fever or chills) or persistent weakness, numbness or tingling in your arm or leg. Call 911 in the event of an emergency.
- Weekdays 8 am to 5 pm call 308-8401 (Riverside), 296-3886 (Southside), 602-1360 (Clay), 691-1297 (St Johns) or Optimal Imaging (450-6960). Weekdays 5 pm to 10 pm or weekends 6 am to 10 pm call 308-8401. If outside of these hours, call the hospital operator at 308-7300 and ask to speak to the Interventional Radiologist on call.

### **How Do I Receive Procedure Results?**

- For joint aspirations, any removed fluid will be sent for laboratory testing. Results can take up to 5 days (sometimes longer) to become available. Please contact your provider's office to obtain results and for follow-up instructions.
- For arthrogram imaging, your provider usually receives the CT or MRI results in 1-2 business days.