

Patient Information

Radiology

Joint aspiration

A small amount of fluid needs to be taken (aspirated) from one of your joints so that it can be sent for tests.

This information leaflet tells you what is involved and the possible risks of having a joint aspiration. It may not answer all your questions. If you have any queries or concerns, please call the telephone number on your appointment letter.

If you feel unhappy with any part of your care in the X-ray Department, please ask to speak to the superintendent radiographer.

Please read this leaflet carefully to ensure you are successfully prepared for the procedure.

What is a joint aspiration?

Joint aspiration is a type of examination. A radiologist will remove a small amount of fluid from a joint using a needle under ultrasound control.

The joints that can be aspirated are; the shoulder, hip, knee, ankle, elbow, wrist, thumb and small joints of the hands and feet.



What is ultrasound?

An ultrasound scan uses sound waves to take pictures of the part of the body being examined. It does not involve X-rays.

Why do I need this procedure?

The fluid taken out of the joint can be sent for testing to help diagnose your condition. For example, the fluid can be used to count the number of blood cells or to see if there is an infection in the joint.

Preparation

- Please do not eat or drink anything for two hours before your appointment.
- You may need to change into a hospital gown if it's your shoulder or hip joint. If it's your knee, you may wish to come wearing loose or short trousers or a skirt.
- Please arrange for someone to drive you home after the procedure.

Referral and consent

The doctor who referred you for this treatment should have discussed why this procedure has been advised. You should make sure that you understand this before attending for the procedure. A radiologist (doctor who specialises in imaging and X-ray examinations) will carry out the procedure.

The radiologist will confirm that you understand why the procedure is being done, its potential risks, and what the chances of success are. You will then be asked to give your verbal consent (the radiologist will record this in the examination report). Or you will be asked to sign a pink consent form confirming that you understand the procedure and are aware of the risks and benefits involved.

If the radiologist feels that your condition has changed or that your symptoms do not indicate that such a procedure is necessary, then they will explain this to you and ask that you return to your referring clinician (e.g. your GP or consultant) for review. At all times, the radiologist will be acting in your best interests.

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During your examination

- A Radiology Department assistant will assist the radiologist performing the procedure.
- The procedure will again be explained to you by the radiologist. You will be able to ask any questions before you give your consent for the procedure to be performed.
- You will be asked to lie on the examination table or sit next to it, depending on which joint is to be aspirated. The radiologist will use ultrasound to locate the part of the joint to be injected.
- Your skin will be cleaned with antiseptic liquid and sterile towels will be placed over you.
- Local anaesthetic will be injected into the skin. The radiologist will then insert a fine needle into the joint and remove a small amount of fluid using a syringe.
- A plaster will be applied to the injection site.
- This procedure may take 15 -30 minutes.

After your examination

- You may get dressed and go home.
- Do not drive yourself home or drive for the next four hours.
- Your joint may feel uncomfortable for a few hours after the joint aspiration. However, we expect you to be able to return to your routine activity four to six hours after the procedure.
- If you have any problems after the examination, please see your GP.

How do I get the results?

You will not get the results immediately. They will be sent to the doctor who referred you for this procedure.

Risks of the procedure

A joint aspiration is a common examination that has little risk.

Infection

However, there is a very small risk of introducing an infection into the joint. Every precaution is taken to avoid infection.

Please go to your local A&E and inform them of the procedure you've had if:

- the joint becomes red
- the joint becomes warm or tender
- you develop a fever in the 5-7 days post-procedure

Numbness in limb

You may get tingling or numbness or a heavy feeling in your limb. This is due to the local anaesthetic and it will only last a couple of hours.

Feeling lightheaded

Very rarely, patients feel lightheaded during the procedure. Their blood pressure may drop and they may feel faint.

If this happens, it will not last long. However the radiology staff may wish to keep you in the department until your blood pressure returns to normal and or you feel better.

Bleeding

There is a small risk of bleeding following the procedure.

Ultrasound

Ultrasound has no known harmful effects.

Points to remember

- Please bring any sprays or inhalers you take with you to your appointment.
- We also ask you to leave any valuable possessions at home.
- If you are on aspirin or any other medication from your doctor, please continue to take it as normal.

Patients who are taking Warfarin or other blood-thinning drugs (except aspirin)

Please contact your anti-coagulation nurse specialist as soon as you get this letter. You may need a blood test to determine if you should alter or stop your treatment a few days before your appointment. Your anti-coagulation nurse specialist will advise you.

Other sources of information

- For general information about radiology departments visit the Royal College of Radiologists website: www.goingfora.com
- For information about the effects of X-rays read the NRPB publication: "X-rays how safe are they?" on the Health Protection Agency website: www.hpa.org.uk

Please note that the views expressed in these websites do not necessarily reflect the views of UHCW NHS Trust or the NHS.

Do you need an interpreter?

If you need an interpreter, we will provide one of our hospital-based interpreters. You cannot use a friend or relative to interpret for you.

We provide an interpreter as you are having a complex procedure and we want you to be supported by someone familiar with explaining your procedure.

A friend or relative is still very welcome to come with you to the hospital.

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You must contact Radiology at least 48 hours before your procedure to let us know that you need an interpreter.

Please call Radiology on 024 7696 6933 and we will arrange an interpreter for you.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact the telephone number 024 7696 6933 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke-free policy.

Did we get it right?

We would like you to tell us what you think about our services. This helps us make further improvements and recognise members of staff who provide a good service.

Have your say. Scan the QR code or visit:
www.uhcw.nhs.uk/feedback



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