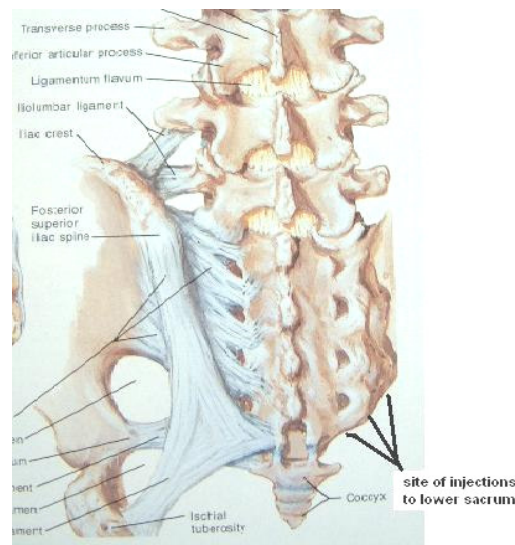


BLOMBERG INJECTION TECHNIQUE

Sacro-coccygeal injections – what is it all about?

The site of injection is into the sacro-coccygeus muscles, which are the remnants of the tail muscles of animals. Animals use their tails to help them with balance. As we don't have a tail, one theory is that these muscles may go into spasm in response to an injury. The pain from these deep muscles may be difficult to localise and can be felt in the low back, buttock or spreading down the leg.

The procedure consists of a rectal examination, feeling for tender muscles and ligaments near the coccyx and then stretching them and injecting with anaesthetic and cortisone. If these muscles are not tender then an injection is not given. The idea of stretching and injecting is not new, however the 'bimanual technique' is different to previous methods used in Australia. The treatment is usually considered as part of an overall management program including exercises and lifestyle modifications.



What are the costs?

Typically an initial assessment will cost around \$130 getting around \$32 back on Medicare as a rough guide. The injection itself is not very expensive. It depends on the exact site of the injection but is usually \$122, (paravertebral injection rebate = \$93.80).

What are the side effects from the steroid needle?

Cortisone is given together with local anaesthetic into the tender region. There may be some initial bruising following the injection, which can be minimised by the application pressure or ice within the first hour. Other common side-effects include temporary flare-up of the pain for 24 hours following the injection, and this usually relates to trauma to the site as a result of the needle and not a specific property of the Cortisone. Temporary flare of pain is nothing to be concerned about and is very common.

A small amount of the Cortisone does escape into the general systemic circulation, and about 1 in 10 people can experience some facial flushing or redness for the first 24 hours, a temporary rise in blood sugar for 24 hours, sleeplessness or euphoria on the night of the injection, and occasionally mild nausea. These general side-effects usually subside within 24-48 hours.

What are the risks involved?

Minimal overall. The injection does not go into the spine or spinal cord area. There is no risk of nerve damage or paralysis. Theoretically it is possible to puncture the bowel, but this is rare and does not appear to cause any problems.

What are the benefits?

The main advantage of using Cortisone via injection is that the drug can be deposited locally and most of the effects are concentrated locally with minimal general side-effects. Cortisone is a powerful anti-inflammatory drug that leads to lessening of pain - leading to improved function.

How does it help sciatica / pinched nerves?

If the nerves are really pinched (causing loss of reflexes), then it is unlikely to help, however we know that in many cases, pain radiating down the leg is not explained by findings on MRI scans and that the pain from muscles can mimic that of nerve irritation. Similarly the signs on MRI scan may not be causing the pain as we also know that almost half the population has a bulging disc on their scan even though most of them don't have pain. Similarly it is possible to get both nerve irritation from a disc prolapse and spasm in local muscles contributing to the pain.

Comprehensive spinal and joint care