

Achilles Tendinopathy High Volume Injections

Department of Podiatric Surgery

This leaflet aims to answer your questions about receiving a high volume injection to treat your foot or ankle tendon pain. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to the clinician who is caring for you.

What is tendinopathy?

Tendinopathy occurs when a tendon is unable to adapt to strains placed upon it. Over time an ability to cope with strain can lead to injury of the tendon fibres and a failure to heal itself properly. Risk factors for tendinopathy include being overweight, diabetes, poor circulation, living a sedentary lifestyle, over training, insufficient rest, inflammatory diseases, biomechanics.

During attempted healing, new blood vessels grow into the tendon and bring with them small nerves. It is believed that these small nerves are a key cause of pain in tendinopathy.

What is a high volume injection and how can it help?

The procedure involves an injection of a large amount of fluid (30-40mls) using a needle into the space between the tendon and the tendon sheath, where the abnormal blood vessels and nerves travel. The fluid injected may contain normal saline (salt water), local anaesthetic and / or a small amount of corticosteroid.

The fluid helps remove the small blood vessels and nerves pushing them away from the tendon. This helps to reduce some of the pain and assists with tendon healing. The injection will be performed with the assistance of an ultrasound scan to ensure the injection is in the correct location.

Who will do the injection?

A podiatrist specially trained in podiatric surgery will administer the injection after you have given your verbal consent.

What should I expect afterwards?

You may be asked to rest for up to 30 minutes after the injection before you go home. You should have someone to drive you back home. You should try and rest for the first 12 to 24 hours after the injection and avoid any activities that normally make your symptoms worse.

Local anaesthetic and steroid injections are usually very well tolerated and you can go back to work the next day if you can maintain very light duties. You may have a sensation of numbness in the treated area after the injection which may last for a few hours. You may be sore at the site of injection for two to three days and you should take your usual painkillers or anti-inflammatory tablets as advised by your clinician.

What happens after the injection?

- After the injection, the site will be covered with a small dressing, usually a plaster. The dressing protects the area from infection and needs to stay on your skin for 24 hours. During that period the dressing should remain clean and dry.
- You will be given a boot to wear for three days; this should be worn for all walking.
- You should arrange a lift home in a car or cab; this will be more comfortable for you and will allow for quicker return to the hospital if there are any complications. No public transport, walking or cycling home.
- Light duties for three days and you may continue with activities of daily living.
- Restart eccentric tendon loading exercises after one week. Start off very gently with low repetitions and gradually increase as tolerated over the next two to three weeks.
- Avoid high impact activity such as jumping / sprinting / hopping. Your clinician can guide you when you restart.

How long will the effects last?

Your injection is part of your treatment plan which aims to break your pain cycle, to enable you to progress with your foot / ankle exercise programme. The effects vary from person to person. However, there is no guarantee that the injection will work for you. If you have had previous injections and they have not lasted, your condition will be reassessed and a new treatment plan may be decided with your clinician.

Are there any risks?

- Low risk of tendon rupture / further injury
- Pain, redness, swelling
- Numbness (local anaesthetic is being injected)
- Failure to reduce tendon pain

When can you return to sport / exercise?

This is largely dictated by your progression with strength and conditioning exercises. The high volume injection only helps with inflammation and pain and even though it might feel more comfortable after the injection, it does not mean the tendon is back to normal.

Returning to aggressive activity too soon could result in further injury to the Achilles tendon or prolong the recovery. As the pain improves, you can increase the tendon loading capacity with your structured exercise programme which will help support your return to sport.

What are the alternatives to a high volume injection?

- You can continue with your structured exercise programme and footwear advice.
- You can continue with your orthotics if you received these due to your biomechanics
- Extracorporeal shockwave therapy

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about injection therapy, please contact the podiatric surgery department on 020 8487 6038 (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4pm) or the hospital's medicines information helpline on 020 8725 1033.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health. **Web:** www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones. **Tel:** 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.

