



Ultrasound Information

What is Ultrasound?

Ultrasound technology is used in medicine to see structures beneath the skin such as tendons and joints. Ultrasound utilizes sound waves that have a higher frequency than can be heard by the human ear. Since it uses sound waves only, this technology is radiation-free! In the shoulder ultrasound can be used to see the rotator cuff (visualize a rotator cuff tear) or perform injections.

Why is Ultrasound used for an Injection?

We use Ultrasound to improve the accuracy of an injection. The most common injection performed in the shoulder is a subacromial injection placed above the rotator cuff. Several studies have shown that by using landmarks only (by feel), the accuracy of this injection is about 70%. In other words, nearly 1 in 3 of these injections are not placed where they are intended! Other shoulder injections including those placed in the glenohumeral (ball and socket) joint, acromioclavicular (AC) joint, or biceps tendon sheath may be even less accurate than 70% when using the "by feel" technique.

Ultrasound allows us to see the space we want to inject and watch the injection fluid enter that space. Studies have shown that Ultrasound leads to better pain relief than injections placed "by feel", presumably because of the increased accuracy of injection.

What is the cost of Ultrasound?

Like many technological advances in medicine, Ultrasound increases the cost of performing an injection. All injections are considered procedures by insurance companies and are therefore billed as a "procedure fee." The use of Ultrasound for an injection results in an additional cost often called an "ultrasonic guidance fee." While these are both accepted by insurance companies, the cost to you (patient responsibility) will vary depending upon your particular insurance plan. If you would like more information about this we would be happy to have one of our billing representatives speak to you before having the injection.

Will my pain go away?

Hopefully! Our goal is certainly to provide you with pain relief and an injection is one method that can be used to get there without surgery. However, in some cases complete pain relief is not achieved. In that case, this information is still valuable because it can help establish a diagnosis (determine the cause of the pain), help determine that another study such as an MRI is needed, or help determine that surgery is needed.

Is Ultrasound or an injection required as part of my visit?

No, neither an injection nor the Ultrasound portion of an injection are required. These are simply methods we offer to patients as a means to hopefully gain pain relief. We believe that Ultrasound is a technological advancement that improves patient care, but is not required. As always, we provide information and you make the decision!