

Patient Information Leaflet for Steroid Injections

Why have an injection?

Steroid injections have been scientifically shown to be very helpful for certain soft tissue and joint disorders. They are used to help calm down inflamed or irritable joints and soft tissues.

What is in the injection?

Corticosteroids are hormones naturally produced by the body. They have several different actions including an anti-inflammatory effect. Synthetic corticosteroids have been produced to mimic this effect.

How many injections will I need?

You may need more than one injection if the symptoms persist, or it may be decided to try another injection in a slightly different place. There is, however, a maximum number of times that the affected area/tissues should be injected, and this will be discussed with you if it is necessary.

Would I continue taking my painkillers?

Yes, there is no danger of taking painkillers at the same time as receiving an injection and it may help with any post-injection flare (see side effects).

What if the injection does not work?

As previously discussed, there is a maximum number of times an area should be injected. You should feel the benefit of the injection soon, if you don't, other treatment and management options will be discussed with you.

Are there any side effects?

Side effects are very rare, we aim to minimise them through the best possible practice.

Possible side effects:

1. Post-injection 'flare' (a temporary increase in pain) can occur 6 to 12 hours after the injection. This normally resolves itself in less than 72 hours. You can take painkillers to help.
2. Facial flushing, where your face goes red, happens in about 1 in 20 people. This usually resolves within a couple of days. There are no long-term side effects.
3. As well as the anti-inflammatory effects, steroids also influence strength of some soft tissues and in some situations an increased risk of tendon rupture. For this reason, we ask you to take care and not to strain the affected area for 2 weeks following the injection.
4. There is a slight possibility of a small dimple and skin colour change appearing at the injection site. This usually lasts for between 6 weeks and 3 months but can be permanent.
5. Infection- This is rare but one which needs immediate attention. If the area which was injected becomes hot, red, swollen, and painful then you should consult your GP immediately.
6. Menstrual Disturbance or a missed period can happen in some women who have had an injection of a large dose of steroid.

7. In people with Diabetes, steroids can result in a slightly raised blood glucose level; we advise you to check your blood sugar more frequently for 24 hours after the injection.

Before your injection, please inform us if any of the following apply:

1. You are, or may be, pregnant or breastfeeding
2. You have any infections
3. You are allergic to anything
4. You have had any recent trauma near the area to be injected
5. You have had any joint replacement or internal metalwork
6. You have had any previous steroid injections
7. You are diabetic
8. You have any bleeding disorders
9. You are taking any medication to thin your blood, such as Warfarin (INR over 3)
10. You are taking any oral steroids
11. You have any problems with your immune system
12. You have been diagnosed with complete heart or have a pacemaker.

Further information on steroid injection can be found at:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/steroid-injections

www.arthritisresearchuk.org

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