

Patient information - Corticosteroid injection

What is a corticosteroid injection?

A corticosteroid (or ‘cortisone’) is an anti-inflammatory medicine, which can be injected directly into the soft tissues or joints that are causing your symptoms.

It is a safer alternative to taking anti- inflammatory medication by mouth. It acts directly in the area injected and is not the same as anabolic steroids taken by bodybuilders or athletes.

Why should I have a corticosteroid injection?

The injection can help to relieve swelling, pain and stiffness caused by inflammation. This may in turn help you to start your rehabilitation and return you to normal activities sooner by ‘breaking the cycle’ of pain and inflammation.

It can also be helpful to aid in the diagnosis of your condition if it is less clear which structures are responsible for your pain. You may also have a local anaesthetic injected at the same time, which allows for temporary pain relief.

What are the risks?

Side effects of the injection are very rare however they include:

- ❖ **Flushing** of the face for a few hours.
- ❖ **Skin depigmentation:** Small area of fat loss or change in skin colour around the injection site.
- ❖ **Post-injection pain:** You may experience an increase in pain a few hours after your injection that can last a few days. You could continue your pain killers or discuss this with your Doctor or Pharmacist.
- ❖ **Transient hyperglycaemia:** Diabetic patients may notice a temporary increase in blood sugar levels.

- ❖ **Temporary bruising or bleeding** if you are taking blood thinning tablets (such as aspirin or warfarin).
- ❖ Mild vaginal bleeding / menstrual irregularities.
- ❖ **Allergic reaction (Anaphylactic shock):** This is extremely rare but is a medical emergency and is associated with difficulty breathing (and other symptoms). It is most likely to happen in the first 15 minutes after an injection (usually involving anaesthetic) but can happen up to 6 hours after the procedure. For this reason, you will need to remain in the clinic / reception for 15 minutes after the injection. If you have any difficulty breathing or any unusual symptoms you must tell us immediately. If it happens after you have left you must seek medical help immediately. Treatment involves another injection and this must be administered quickly. However, please be assured this is extremely rare.
- ❖ **Infection:** if the area becomes hot, swollen and painful for more than 24 hours, or if you feel generally unwell, you should contact your Physiotherapist or Doctor immediately. If they are unavailable, you should seek advice from your GP, dialing 111, or attending A&E
- ❖ **Tendon Rupture:** injection closer to tendons can rarely cause damage to the tendon and very rarely lead to rupture with excessive loading immediately post injection.

Are there any contraindications?

You **SHOULD NOT** have the injection carried out if you:

1. Have had or are due to have a Covid-19 vaccination within 14 days.
2. Have any infection in the area or anywhere else in your body.
3. Are allergic to local anaesthetic or steroid.
4. Feel unwell or are due to have surgery in the treatment area soon.
5. Have poorly controlled diabetes.
6. Do not want the injection or have needle phobia.

Are there any other alternatives?

- ❖ Lifestyle changes – rest and activity modification
- ❖ Heat or cold packs, self-massage
- ❖ Anti-inflammatory gel application
- ❖ Use of oral anti-inflammatory medications
- ❖ Physiotherapy
- ❖ Sometimes surgical opinion

What happens during the injection?

1. The benefits and risks of the injection will be explained to you in detail.
2. You will then be placed in a comfortable position.
3. The skin is cleaned with antiseptic.
4. A needle is gently positioned into the affected area and the solution is injected through the needle.
5. A plaster or if allergic an equivalent will be placed over the site to keep it clean.
6. A few minutes after the injection you will be examined again.

What happens after the procedure?

- a. If local anaesthetic is also used in the injection, your pain may start to improve within a few minutes although this may return when it wears off (similar to when you visit the dentist).
- b. The steroid usually starts to work after 24–48 hours, but it may take a little longer.
- c. The effect of the injection varies from person to person and usually continues to last for three to four months.
- d. This does not necessarily mean that you will need a second injection, so long as you follow the advice given to you after the injection.

What do I need to do after I go home?

- a. You should take relative rest for a period of five days after the injection to maximise the injection outcome.
- b. This does not usually mean total rest, but refraining from activities that make your pain worse, heavy manual work or contact activities for at least five days.
- c. You may also be shown some exercises to do whilst you are in the clinic or referred for Physiotherapy or Sport and Exercise Therapist sessions.
- d. If you are having other medical treatment within six weeks, you should tell the treating clinician that you have received a corticosteroid injection.

Will I have a follow-up appointment?

Routine follow up appointment is not necessary after an injection. However, you may be asked to attend a follow up appointment a few weeks after your injection to check your progress.

What if my injection doesn't work?

Research evidence supports the injection you have received, and most people feel the procedure help. For certain conditions two injections are required. For health reasons there is an upper limit to the number of injections a person should have in any given time, and, not everyone benefits. Your Doctor or Physiotherapist will discuss alternative ways to manage your symptoms if you don't benefit as expected from the injection(s).

Contact us: If you have any questions or anything you would like to talk about regarding the injection via our phone number or email.

Medication used and dosage:

Body part injected:

Clinician name: