

MUSCULOSKELETAL SERVICES PATIENT INFORMATION – STEROID JOINT INJECTIONS

What is the injection for?

Steroid injections are known to be a useful treatment for pain, swelling and stiffness within a joint. or the area around the joint. They are mainly used to reduce inflammation and pain. The joint is injected with a preparation of local anaesthetic and corticosteroid. The anaesthetic will reduce the initial pain and the corticosteroid will reduce the inflammation.

Restrictions with Injections?

Please let us know if any of the following before you attend the clinic for an injection;

- any open wounds such as leg ulcers or cellulitis
- an artificial joint present in the area to be injected
- on any antibiotic treatment and within 48 hours of stopping
- allergic to local anesthetic or steroid
- on HIV treatment (Corticosteroid can interact with HIV medication)
- are receiving any chemotherapy treatment for the management of cancer
- have uncontrolled blood clotting levels on a blood thinning drug (eg Warfarin)
- Accessing the joint is difficult
- You have uncontrolled Diabetes Mellitus
- You are pregnant or breast feeding (if injection is essential it is not advisable to have more than 40mg of steroid in a day)

Your clinician administering the injection will discuss the side effects with you at the time of the injection. These are very unlikely.

What are the potential side effects?

- **Flare Up:** Occasionally people notice a flare in their joint pain within the first 24 hours after an injection. This usually settles on its own within a couple of days. Use your usual pain killers to relieve symptoms.
- **Infection:** Very rarely infection might be introduced into the joint at the time of an injection (estimated as 1 in 23000). If the joint becomes more painful and hot, red, or swollen; you should see your doctor immediately.
- **Thinning of skin:** Occasionally some thinning of the skin or dimpling skin colour change may occur at the injection site. This is more likely to happen if you have a higher dose of steroid,
- **Facial flushing:** Steroid injections may sometimes cause facial flushing or interfere with the menstrual cycle making them irregular temporarily. However you should consult your GP if concerned, or if it persists.
- **Mood change:** Any treatment with steroids may cause changes in mood – either elation or depression. This may be more common in people with a previous history of mood disturbance. If you have concerns please discuss this with your doctor.
- **Change in glycaemic control:** People with diabetes may find that the steroid injection affects their blood sugar control; sometimes you may notice a temporary blood sugar rise. It is recommended that you check your blood levels more regularly; it may take between 1-3 weeks for them to settle.

What should I expect after my joint injection?

- We advise you spend 30 minutes resting quietly in the clinic waiting area and make sure you feel well before you leave. Avoid strenuous activity for the rest of the day.

- The injected area may be numb for up to 24 hours.
- The injected site may be sore for one to two days.
- Do not use heat pads or any other form of heat on the injection site for two days following the injection. You may however choose to use an ice pack on the injection site as required, if you find this beneficial.
- For a weight bearing joint we recommend that you rest and gently potter at home for 2 days post injection to improve the likelihood of a good response.
- You may develop a bruise at the injection site.
- Most people notice improvement in their pain in 2 weeks. Maximum improvement of your pain may take up to 6 weeks following your injection.

IMPORTANT: If you develop a rash or if the injection site is red, hot, swollen or painful, you may be developing an infection. Please contact you the musculoskeletal team on 0300 303 8063, or contact your GP. If you are unable to contact either of these and continue to have concerns, please go to A&E.

If you have any queries or problems following your joint injection please call BICS on 0300 303 8063 or contact your GP.