

Steroid Joint Injections

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

Are There any Restrictions with Injections?

- **Any open wounds** such as leg ulcers or cellulitis at the site of the injection.
- **An artificial joint** in the area to be injected.
- **Recent antibiotic treatment** including within 48 hours of stopping.
- **Allergy** to local anaesthetic or steroid.
- **On HIV Treatment**, Corticosteroid can interact with HIV medication.
- **Are receiving any chemotherapy** treatment for the management of cancer.
- **Taking a blood thinning drug** (e.g. Warfarin) to control blood clotting levels.
- **If your diabetes** is not currently controlled.
- **Are pregnant or breast feeding.** (If injection is essential it is not advisable to have more than 40mg of steroid in a day.)

What are the Potential Side Effects?

Side effects of a steroid injection are unlikely but you need to be aware of these:

Flare Up - Occasionally people notice worsening in their joint pain within the first 24 hours after an injection. This usually settles within a couple of days. Use your usual pain killers to relieve symptoms.

Infection - this is a very low risk (as low 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 with skin colour change may occur at the injection site.

Facial Flushing and Menstrual Changes - Steroid injections may sometimes cause facial flushing or interfere with the menstrual cycle making them irregular temporarily.

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.

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 to spend 30 minutes resting** quietly in the clinic waiting area to 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 and you can experience discomfort at this site for 2 days. It is normal for the injection site to bruise.
- **Do not use heat pads** or any other form of heat on the injection site for two days, however using an ice pack can be beneficial for some people.
- **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.
- **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 the musculoskeletal team, or your GP. If you are unable to contact either of these and continue to have concerns, please go to your local minor injuries unit or A&E.

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