

Steroid Joint Injections and Anaesthetic 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 injected with a preparation of local anaesthetic and corticosteroid. The anaesthetic aims to reduce the pain initially for 30 minutes and the corticosteroid aims to reduce the inflammation and therefore it may take up to 2 weeks for the effects of the injection to start working. The response to the injection varies from person to person but can last from several weeks to many months. There is some research to suggest that steroid may be harmful to tendon tissue so your clinician will discuss the risks and benefits for your condition on an individual basis.

Are There any Restrictions with Injections?

There are some health conditions for which an injection of steroid and anaesthetic is restricted. Please let us know of any of the following before you attend the clinic for an injection and your clinician will discuss these with you:

- **Any open wounds** such as leg ulcers or cellulitis at the site of the injection
- **An artificial joint** present in the area to be injected
- **On any antibiotic treatment** for an infection or within 48 hours of stopping
- **Allergy** to local anesthetic or steroid
- **On immunosuppressant drugs** e.g. for HIV or arthritis
- **Are receiving any chemotherapy** treatment for the management of cancer
- **Taking a blood thinner** e.g. warfarin
- **You have uncontrolled Diabetes Mellitus**
- **You are pregnant** or breast feeding
- **You have had a live vaccine** within the past 4 weeks
- **You have or have had Tuberculosis (TB)** in the past
- **You have Glaucoma**
- **You have had an adverse reaction** to a steroid or anaesthetic injection in the past

What are the Potential Side Effects?

Side effects of a steroid injection are rare. Your clinician will discuss the side effects with you at the time of the injection.

Flare Up Affects about 1 in 10 people. 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. Take 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 23,000 people). If the joint or area becomes more painful and hot, red, or swollen you may be developing an infection. You should see your doctor immediately or if this is not possible go to A&E

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. You should consult your GP if concerned, or if it persists.

Mood Change: 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 Glycemic Control People with diabetes may find that the steroid injection affects their blood sugar control; 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. Report to reception if you feel unwell.
- **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 as explained in the side effects.
- **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 for pain.
- **For a weight bearing joint we recommend that you rest and gently potter at home** for 2 days after your 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.
- **If you are having a vaccination within 4 weeks of your injection** please contact your GP

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 A&E.

Follow up after injection is not required in most cases. If you do not benefit from your injection or you have any queries contact SMSKP for reassessment. Your records are kept open for 6 months should you need to contact us.