



Musculoskeletal corticosteroid injection

Information for patients from the Orthopaedic Hand Service

Steroid injections can be given for a number of conditions, they act to decrease inflammation and can also help with pain. Your therapist/doctor feels that a steroid injection may help as part of your treatment. This leaflet explains the risks and benefits of having a corticosteroid injection, as well as what you can expect when you come to the hospital.

If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to the doctor, nurse, or therapist caring for you. This leaflet does not list all of the uses and side effects of the medicines we use - please see the manufacturer's patient information leaflet, that comes with the medicine, for further information.

What is a corticosteroid injection?

A steroid injection is a small amount of anti-inflammatory medication injected into a specific area to treat a condition. Local anaesthetic may be injected at the same time to help reduce the immediate pain experienced following your injection.

What are the benefits? Why should I have a corticosteroid injection?

The injection can help to relieve swelling, pain, and stiffness caused by inflammation. This may allow you to start your rehabilitation and return to normal activities sooner.

A steroid injection can also be helpful to aid in the diagnosis of your condition, if it is not clear which structures are causing your pain.

Are there alternatives?

There are other ways of treating these types of inflammatory or arthritic conditions such as medication (anti-inflammatory tablets) and physiotherapy. Your doctor/therapist can advise on whether any of these are likely to be helpful for you.

There is also the option of doing nothing, however symptoms may continue if you do this.



Are there any reasons not to have the injection?

- If you have an infection on your skin or anywhere else in your body
- If you know you are allergic to steroids or local anaesthetic
- If you feel unwell
- If you are due to have surgery in that area soon
- If you have poorly controlled diabetes
- If you do not want the injection
- If you are under 18.

What are the possible side effects?

- **Flushing** of your face for a few hours or days after having your injection.
- Small area of **fat loss or skin colour change** which can be seen for about two to three years after your injection.
- An increase in **pain** 24 to 48 hours after your injection.
- **Slight vaginal bleeding or changes to your monthly period.**
- **Blood thinning medication:** if you are taking blood thinning drugs you may experience some temporary bleeding or bruising. We will carry out injections with you on warfarin provided your blood test for the warfarin does not suggest that you are taking too much and that you are not actively bleeding from somewhere. In practice this means we need a recent INR result in order to complete your injection. We will proceed with the injection if your INR is below 2.5.
- **Infection:** if the area becomes hot, swollen, and painful, please contact your GP or go to your local Accident and Emergency (A&E) Department or Urgent Treatment Centre for advice.
- **Allergic reaction** to the drug: you will be asked to wait in the department for a short time after your injection to check for any reactions.
- **Diabetes:** your blood sugar may run a bit higher or be more erratic for a few days after a single steroid injection, so take care with monitoring it. This effect does not stop you being able to have an injection.

What happens during the injection?

The benefits and risks of the injection will be explained to you in detail before the injection takes place. There will be time to ask any questions and you will be asked to give your consent. Please remember you can withdraw your consent for treatment at any time.

You will be placed in a comfortable position and your skin will be cleaned with an antiseptic wipe. A needle is gently put into the affected part and the solution injected through the needle.

If local anaesthetic was given at the same time, the area may become numb for a few hours following the injection. This will gradually return to normal and the effects of the steroid usually start to take effect within two to three weeks.

Will I feel any pain?

The injection can be uncomfortable during the procedure and some of the medicines used can sting as they are injected in.

What happens after the procedure?

If local anaesthetic is also used in the injection, your pain may start to improve within a few minutes, although it may return when the local anaesthetic wears off. The steroid usually starts to work after 24 to 48 hours, but it may take up to two to three weeks. The effects vary from person to person.

How long will I be in hospital for?

The injection will be given during your outpatient clinic appointment. The injection itself should not take any longer than a few minutes, once a discussion has been had and the injection prepared. After the injection you will be able to go home.

Can I drive home?

Most people feel able to drive after their injection but if you do experience pain after your injection then you may find driving difficult. As a result, if possible, it is a good idea to arrange for someone else to drive you home following your procedure.

What do I need to do after I go home?

Depending on the cause of your pain, you may be asked to rest the area for a short time after your injection. This does not usually mean total rest, but just not doing activities that make your pain worse. After this time, you should try to gradually return to doing your normal activities.

If you are having any other medical treatment within six weeks of your injection, you should tell the treating clinician that you have received a corticosteroid injection.

Will I have a follow-up appointment?

You may be asked to return for a follow-up appointment, to check your progress. Occasionally, more than one injection is needed and this can be discussed at this appointment.

What if I have any questions or concerns?

Please contact the secretary of the person you saw in the Fracture Clinic. This information is on your appointment letter.

This leaflet has been produced with and for patients

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff. You can ask someone to contact us on your behalf.

Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 78 31 45, or email ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net

Patients should not bring in large sums of money or valuables into hospital. Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property had been handed in to Trust staff for safe-keeping.

Further patient leaflets are available via the East Kent Hospitals web site www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/patientinformation