

PATIENT INFORMATION – STEROID JOINT INJECTIONS

Joint and soft tissue injections:

Cortisone (also known as corticosteroid or steroid) is anti-inflammatory medicine used to treat the body's joint and soft tissue conditions. It can be used alongside other treatments to help people to recover or manage their condition. In some cases it is injected along with some local anaesthetic as a form of short term pain relief. It is not the same as steroids misused in sports.

What are the benefits?

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 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 not clear which structures are responsible for your pain.

Are there any side effects?

All treatments and procedures have potentially unwanted effects. However there are very few problems associated with joint or soft tissue injections. Your healthcare professional will have discussed these with you already. However, the most commonly occurring side effects are:

- Pain for a day or two at the site of injection.
- Infection; infection is rare but if the area becomes hot, swollen or painful for more than 24 hours or if you feel generally unwell, please make contact either with the person who carried out your injection or your GP.
- In rare cases a slight thinning of the skin or a small patch of scarring over the injection site. This is rare and usually only occurs in superficial soft tissue injections.
- People who are diabetic may notice alterations in their blood sugar levels. If you are diabetic you will need to keep an eye on your blood sugar levels for the next 48 hours and act accordingly.
- Some patients may develop a harmless facial flushing.
- Adverse reactions to either the steroid or local anaesthetic used.

What happens if you are going to be offered an injection?

You will be asked questions to make sure it is safe for you to have the injection. If you agree to have the injection, you will either sit or lie in a comfortable position. The part of your body to be injected will be cleaned and then this part will be injected.

Is it painful?

Patients report very little pain with an injection especially when it is delivered by a trained health professional. The amount of discomfort will vary from person to person.

Does it always work?

An injection may not always be helpful. As part of your assessment, the health professional will assess you to ensure that you are likely to benefit from the injection. The effects can last up to six weeks or beyond. It is not considered to be a long term treatment. Some injections can be repeated. Speak to your healthcare professional about this option.

What about after the injection?

You may have some discomfort in the injected area for 24 – 48 hours. During this period it is advisable to rest the area. You may be advised to start other aspects of your treatment afterwards. Seek the advice of the health professional you are seeing for your condition.

You will be asked to wait for up to 30 mins after your injection to ensure you feel well.

We recommend not driving afterwards as it is difficult to ensure you will be safe to do so. Please consider this prior to your injection.

You should not have the injection carried out if you:

- Have any infection in the area or anywhere else in your body.
- Are allergic to local anaesthetic or steroid.
- Feel unwell.
- Are due to have surgery in that area soon.
- Are pregnant or breast feeding.
- Have poorly controlled diabetes.
- Do not want the injection.

If you have any queries or problems following your joint injection, please contact Sussex MSK Partnership using the number on your appointment letter or contact your GP.