

Local steroid injections

Trauma & Orthopaedics

Introduction

This leaflet will provide you with the information you need to know about local steroid injections. These injections have been tested and have helped many people who have joint pain and inflammation. However, as with all drugs some people will have side-effects and this leaflet sets out what you need to know.

Local steroid injections can be a rapid and effective treatment for joint pain and inflammation, although the improvement is usually temporary.

What are steroids and how are steroid injections used?

Some steroids occur naturally in the human body. Man-made steroids act like natural steroids to reduce inflammation. They're not the same as the steroids used by body builders to increase their muscle size and strength.

They can be taken as tablets or given as injections into the affected area (a 'local' injection). Steroid injections are often recommended for people with rheumatoid arthritis and other types of inflammatory arthritis. They may also be recommended for osteoarthritis if your joints are very painful or if you need additional pain relief for a time. The injection should reduce inflammation, which in turn reduces pain.

What should I expect before the local injection?

A GP, rheumatologist, orthopaedic surgeon, rheumatology nurse or physiotherapist will choose the most appropriate steroid mixture and dose for your condition and symptoms. They may want to check your blood pressure and blood sugar before your first injection as steroid injections can cause these to rise. They might delay the injection if either is raised.

You should mention that you take anticoagulants to the person giving the injection to make sure that they're aware. If you discuss this beforehand, you may be advised to adjust your warfarin dose before having the steroid injection.

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

- Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111
- Keep the environment clean and tidy
- Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.

What happens during the injection

Depending on where the pain and inflammation is, steroids can be injected:

- Directly into an inflamed joint (intra-articular injection)
- Into the soft tissues close to the joint (peri-articular injection)
- Into a muscle (intra-muscular injection).

Most injections are quick and easy to perform. An ultrasound scan, however, may be used to find exactly where the inflammation is so the steroid can be injected into a precise spot. However, many injections can be given without the need for ultrasound.

Sometimes you'll be given a local anaesthetic with the steroid to reduce the discomfort of the injection. If you do have a local anaesthetic, your pain should be relieved within minutes but it will usually wear off within half an hour unless the anaesthetic selected is long acting. **It is important you do not get up and walk about after a hip or knee injection without assistance as you may still experience some numbness from the anaesthetic.**

What will happen after the injection

You may want to arrange transport home after the injection, especially if you have had a local anaesthetic, because numbness from the anaesthetic can make it difficult to drive.

If you have an injection into a joint, you should rest it, or at least avoid strenuous exercise, for the first 1-2 days. It's also important, however, not to rest for too long.

If you are having a course of physiotherapy, the physiotherapist may be keen to give more intensive mobilisation treatment after the injection, while your joint is less painful. Injections are often used as a short term option to relieve pain whilst you and your doctor find the right medications to control your arthritis in the long term. Once your arthritis is under control the need for injections should be reduced.

What are the possible risks and side effects?

Most people have steroid injections without any side-effects. They can be a little uncomfortable at the time of injection but many people find that they're not as bad as they had feared. Occasionally people notice a flare-up in their joint pain within the first 24 hours after an injection. This usually settles by itself within a couple of days, but taking simple painkillers like paracetamol will help.

1. Thinning or discoloration of skin

Injections can occasionally cause some thinning or changes in the colour of the skin at the injection site, particularly with stronger preparations. In very rare cases an injection of steroids into the muscle can lead to an indentation in the skin around the area.

2. Infection

Very rarely you may get an infection in the joint at the time of an injection. If your joint becomes more painful and hot you should see your doctor immediately, especially if you feel unwell.

3. Weight gain

People are often concerned about the possibility of other steroid-related side-effects such as weight gain. One of the advantages of steroid injections compared to tablets is that often the dose can be kept low. This means that these other side-effects are very rare unless injections are given frequently (more than a few times per year).

4. Changes in period and moods

Other possible side-effects are facial flushing, temporary changes in women's periods and changes in mood - you may feel very high or very low. This may be more common in people with a previous history of mood disturbance. If you are worried please discuss this with your doctor.

5. Rise in blood sugar levels.

It is also usual to see a rise in blood sugar levels for a few days after the injection if you have diabetes.

6. You can experience some significant numbness post hip or knee injection due to the use of local anaesthetic. Please do not stand unaided post injection unaided as you will be at a high risk of falling.

Please follow the advice of the nursing staff.

Can I take other medicines along with local steroid injections?

You can take other medicines with local steroid injections. However, if you are taking a drug that thins the blood (an anticoagulant) such as warfarin, you may need an extra blood test to make sure that your blood is not too thin to have the injection. This is because of the risk of bleeding into the joint.

Discharge information

Keep an eye on the injection site for any signs of redness and contact the **back in trouble clinic** if you are worried.

You can remove the dressing after 24 hours.

Useful contacts

Back in trouble clinic

Tel: 01902695380

Appointments line: 01902307999 ext: 5200

Opening hours 9:00am - 4:00pm

English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。