

Local Steroid Injections

Patient Information Leaflet

What is a joint injection?

We use a fine needle to inject a small amount of steroid into your joint(s). This reduces swelling and pain. We often inject some local anaesthetic (painkiller), into your joint as well. This does not reduce inflammation but gives temporary pain relief. Please tell your GP if you have had reaction to an injection of local anesthetic previously (e.g. at the dentist).

How long will it be before my joints feel better?

The local anaesthetic will start to reduce your pain within a few minutes of the injection, lasting up to 1-2 hours. The steroid can take 1-2 days after the injection before your joint starts to feel better. While you are waiting for the steroid to work you can take painkillers such as Paracetamol, or use cold packs.

After the injection, the joint should feel better for up to 3 months and sometimes longer, but everybody is

different so it may not last this long.

Can I leave the clinic straight after the injection?

Generally you will be able to leave around 10 minutes after your injection, as long as you feel well.

Very rarely people can have an allergic reaction to the drugs. If you have an allergic reaction you get a rash on your skin, feel your face swelling up or feel you can't breathe properly. If this happens we will be able to treat you immediately.

If you have any of these symptoms later on at home you should call 999.

Do I need to rest after the injection?

It is recommended to rest the joint that has been injected for 48 hours. This helps the injection work better. If you cannot rest the joint completely, you can move the joint injected as normal but avoid lifting or pushing heavy objects for 1 week.

You **should not drive** home after your injection as numbness from an anesthetic can make it difficult to drive.

I am diabetic - does the injection affect my diabetes?

The steroid can make your blood sugar higher than normal. You need to check your blood more often for a week. You may need to increase your insulin.

May I take other medicines along with the steroid injection?

You may take other medications with steroid injections. It is important you tell us if you are taking any drug that thins your blood (an anticoagulant) such as **Warfarin**; you should bring your monitoring booklet showing your recent INR results. You should arrange a repeat INR 3 days after the injection. Your INR should be less than 3.

If you take a **Novel Oral Anticoagulant** (Dabigatran, Rivaroxaban or

apixaban), do not take it on the day of your injection until you get home afterwards.

I am on biologic therapies - does that matter?

If you are taking an anti-TNF therapy or other biologic therapies we can still inject your joints. You must be especially quick to tell us if you have any signs of infection in your joint (see below) or if you feel generally unwell because you are taking a medication that affects your body's natural defences against infection.

What are the risks or side-effects?

Side effects are rare. Very occasionally people notice a flare in their joint pain within the first 24 hours. This usually settles within a few days.

The most important but very rare side effect of treatment is **infection** in your joint - this is very rare (for every 20,000 injections we give, only one of them would get an infection).

Importantly you should remember that

if you have an infected joint it will **not** get better with the rest and ice packs and will need a review.

If you have a high temperature and your joint becomes:

Hot ▪ Red ▪ Swollen ▪ Painful

Then you should contact us direct or contact 111 if it is out of hours or at the weekend.

Are there other side effects I need to know about?

- Some patients experience facial flushing after an injection or itching at the injection site. These symptoms should settle within the first 1-2 days.
- Skin changes - very occasionally you may see some thinning or discoloration at the site of the injection. This is called de-pigmentation and may take longer to fade; sometimes it has a permanent effect.
- Menstrual disturbance - women may have some changes in their normal cycle after an injection.

This is more likely if you have more than one joint injected. If it lasts longer than one cycle you should see your doctor.

If you have any reactions that you are concerned about you should contact your GP or NHS Direct (111) for advice.

How often can I have my joints injected?

The most we will give you into the same joint is 3 in a year, as there is a small risk of frequent injections causing cartilage damage, especially in weight-bearing joints.

Where can I obtain further information?

If you would like any further information, please discuss this with your GP.

You can also go to www.arc.org for a leaflet on joint injections or contact NHS Direct for advice and guidance.