

STERIOD INJECTION INFORMATION SHEET

Steroid (or cortisone) injections are used to treat painful conditions of the joints and soft tissues, such as bursitis, tennis elbow, inflammation caused by arthritis, and some nerve problems such as carpal tunnel syndrome. Steroid injections provide prolonged relief of inflammatory pain, particularly when used with the guidance of your healthcare provider/treatment provider.

This sheet discusses low-dose injections that can be given up to a few times per year.

Steroid injections are generally very safe and well tolerated. Steroid injections are safe in the second half of pregnancy (after 20 weeks).

HOW DO THEY WORK?

Steroid injections work by delivering a powerful anti-inflammatory directly to the painful area. The steroid may take a few days to become effective and may give sustained relief. Usually, only one injection is required, but sometimes several are required over a number of months to relieve the condition.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN?

We will discuss the procedure & outcomes and provide an opportunity to ask questions. Your consent will be required. The doctor will clean and scan the affected area prior to performing the injection.

WHAT WILL YOU FEEL?

The needle, which is very small, is carefully guided into the area of inflammation. Local anaesthetic is mixed with the steroid, so that the area goes numb during the injection.

AFTER THE INJECTION:

The local anaesthetic wears off within a couple of hours and the injected area may be more uncomfortable for 24 to 48 hours. Rest, ice compresses and paracetamol will help relieve this pain. Avoid strenuous activity for 1-2 weeks after the procedure. Follow your treatment provider's advice regarding ongoing management and activity level.

If you are not already seeing a physiotherapist/osteopath, long term benefit from the injection will be enhanced by a rehabilitation programme, commencing 7-10 days after the injection.

It is generally recommended to have someone drive you home after your injection.

Possible side effects may include numbness at the site of the injection which may affect your ability to operate a vehicle safely.

Although uncommon, you may experience minor reactions to the injection, such as:

- Bruising or bleeding at the site of injection, which is generally minor.
- People with diabetes may get a temporary rise in blood sugar levels and need to monitor their blood sugar levels closely over the next few days.
- Superficial injections may rarely result in thinning or pallor of the skin or local fat loss. This is not painful and mostly returns to normal after a few months.
- The injection can cause hot flushes, which can last for a day or two.

MORE SERIOUS PROBLEMS

These are all very unlikely but do occur occasionally. If you have any concerns about a possible adverse reaction to the injection, please discuss with your treatment provider.

INFECTION is very uncommon, but may present as pain, heat, redness & swelling. If you feel unwell, you should see your GP immediately.

CARTILAGE AND TENDON DAMAGE

Frequent injections into weight bearing joints can cause cartilage damage. Injections are rarely put into large tendons, such as the Achilles tendon as the medication has the potential to weaken the tendon.

EFFECTS ON THE REST OF THE BODY

The steroid from the injection is absorbed over time and is low dose compared with those taken as pills for medical problems. Side effects are highly unlikely with single or even a few steroid injections.

If you'd like some extra information about steroid injections how they work, possible side effects, and what to expect afterward, you can check out the helpful resources on the Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora website, just follow the link below. <https://info.health.nz/health-topics/tests-and-treatments/medicines/steroid-injections>

EchoNorth cannot guarantee how effective a steroid injection will be for addressing your pain/symptoms or how long the benefit will last. Your treatment provider believes that this injection will help in your diagnosis/management. If you have any questions regarding this, please discuss them with your referrer.

CARE FOLLOWING YOUR INJECTION

IMPORTANT

- **KEEP THE INJECTION SITE CLEAN AND COVERED FOR ONE WEEK.**
- **AVOID SPA & SWIMMING POOLS FOR ONE WEEK**
- **KEEP TAKING ALL USUAL MEDICATIONS UNLESS TOLD OTHERWISE BY YOUR DOCTOR**

The injection you have just received normally goes without incident. The injection area may be sore, throb or be slightly swollen for 1-2 weeks. It is very important that you rest the area of the injection for 24 to 48 hours after the injection. Applying ice to the area (10 to 15 minutes every one to two hours) for the first day or two will help reduce any pain. In addition, you may benefit from taking Paracetamol or your usual pain relief medication.

A numbing medication is given with the injection, which can last 1 to 2 hours. The actual Cortisone may take up to 1-2 weeks to take effect. If you develop any abnormal symptoms, such as itching, swelling, redness, rash or shortness of breath, please call your GP. Normally, these are temporary symptoms that resolve within a day. The duration of pain relief from these injections varies widely between patients. Some report two or more months of relief while other patients report only a few weeks of relief. For further advice on your ongoing pain management, please consult your Specialist, General Practitioner or Treatment Provider.

PAIN DIARY

You may be given a Pain Diary on the day to determine the response to your injection. Take this with you when you see your treatment provider.

If you have any concerns following your injection, please contact your GP, AFTERHOURS White Cross A&E or HEALTHLINE 0800 611 116