

What are corticosteroid injections used for?

Corticosteroid (steroid) injections are used to help relieve pain and inflammation in joints and soft tissues. They may also be used to contribute towards making a diagnosis.

What will the injection involve?

The procedure will be explained to you and we will check it is safe for you to have the injection. You can ask any questions you wish.

The steroid will be injected into the affected area with a small needle. This may be uncomfortable whilst it is taking place, but local anaesthetic is also included to make the injection more comfortable.

Are there alternatives to having a steroid injection?

There are alternatives to having a steroid injection. These may include oral anti-inflammatory medication, splinting, exercises, changes to lifestyle, surgery or a decision not to treat the symptoms.

These options are not all available for every condition. Your practitioner will discuss options with you to help you make a decision regarding your treatment.

What are the benefits?

The benefits are potential reduction in symptoms, including a reduction in pain and inflammation, and therefore an increase in the range of movement.

What are the risks?

Side-effects have sometimes been noted to occur with steroid injections. They include, but are not limited to:

- an increase in pain shortly after the injection
- bleeding
- bruising
- facial flushing
- a temporary increase in blood sugar levels in diabetic patients
- temporary change in menstrual bleeding
- a small loss of fat or change of colour to the skin (particularly in darker skins) in the area around the injection site

More serious reactions have also occurred but are rare, for example: allergic reactions;

infection or tendon ruptures.

What should I do after the steroid injection?

Please wait in the department for 15 minutes after you have received the injection.

While you are waiting, please book a follow-up appointment as advised by your practitioner.

If you feel well and your hand and arm are comfortable after this time you can go home. You may drive yourself.

You should rest your hand and arm for 24 hours after your injection, avoiding lots of movement and heavy use. If needed, take your normal pain relief.

What if it doesn't work?

If the steroid injection does not relieve your symptoms it may be appropriate for you to have a second injection or a different treatment. These options will be discussed with you at your follow-up appointment.

What should I do if I have any concerns after the injection?

If you have any queries about your injection please contact the Hand Therapy department and ask for the clinical lead. If you have pain that rapidly gets worse in the first two days after the injection this may mean an infection is present and you should contact us for medical advice immediately.

Hand Therapy department

Tel: 01342 414072

8am to 5pm - Monday to Friday

For urgent concerns out of hours, please contact the Minor Injuries Unit, before 10pm, on 01342 414376 or the hospital switchboard, on 01342 414000, at any time.

Please ask if you would like this leaflet in larger print or a different format.

Therapy department
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Upper limb corticosteroid injections

Information for patients

