

Corticosteroid Injection

What is Corticosteroid

Some steroids occur naturally in the human body. Pharmaceutical steroids act like natural steroids to reduce inflammation. A corticosteroid (or 'cortisone') is an anti-inflammatory medicine, which can be injected directly into the tissues that are causing your symptoms. It is a safer alternative to taking anti-inflammatory medication by mouth. It acts directly in the area injected and is not the same as the steroids taken by bodybuilders or athletes.

Why are they used?

Corticosteroid injections are commonly used for the treatment of joint and soft tissue disorders. They have been shown to be helpful for easing pain and reducing high levels of inflammation.

Steroid injections are often used in conjunction with local anaesthetic. There are several different types of both steroid and anaesthetic which may be used. Most patients experience an improvement in their symptoms lasting a few weeks. For some the beneficial effect will persist for several months. Some patients unfortunately gain little or no benefit.

Possible side effects

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 damage to the layer of fat under your skin and cause an indentation in the skin around the area.

Occasionally people may notice a flare up of their pain within the first 24-hours after injection at the site of injection or within the joint. This is called a 'steroid flare' and is when the drug comes out of suspension after injection. It is not dangerous, occurs quite frequently and normally settles within a couple of days. Simple painkillers, such as paracetamol, may help.

It is very rare that you may get an infection in the joint at the time of injection. Research suggest this is less than 1 in 25,000 injections. Warning signs include worsening pain and redness and swelling of the joint. If concerned you should ALWAYS call our office or seek medical attention.

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).

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're worried please discuss this with your doctor. It's also usual to see a rise in blood sugar levels for a few days after the injection if you have diabetes.

Can I take other medicines along with the corticosteroid?

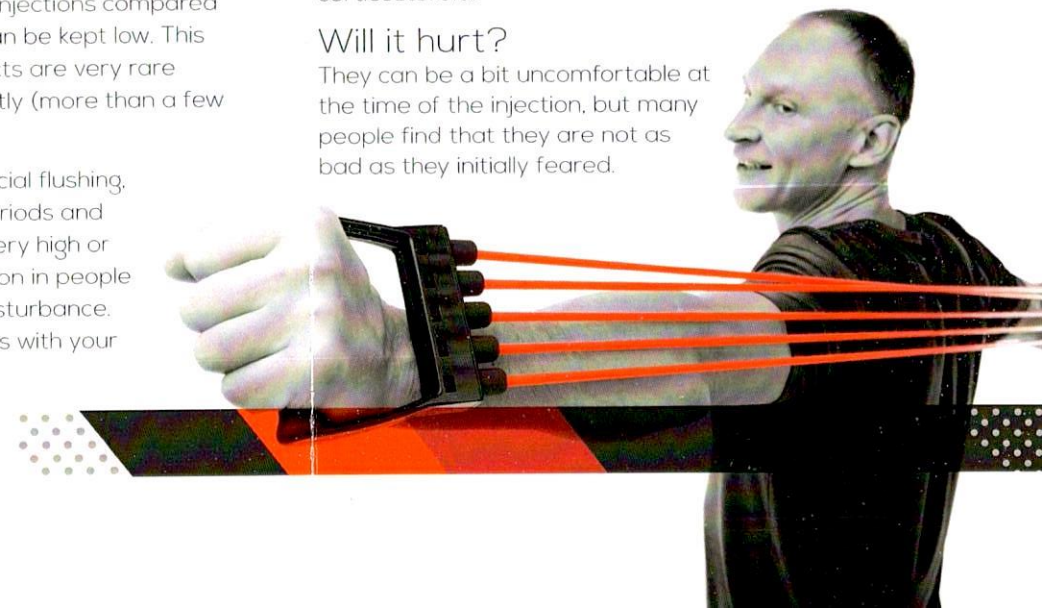
Yes, you can take other medications alongside the corticosteroid injection. There are no known significant drug interactions that occur. However, if you are taking a blood-thinning drug, such as Warfarin, or NOAC medication you MUST highlight this to the team as you will be required to take a particular course of action before an injection. This is because of the risk of bleeding into the joint at the time of the injection.

Will I need another injection?

If you find the corticosteroid injection helpful, and other treatments have been unsuitable or have not helped, the injection may be repeated. There is currently no evidence to suggest any long term harm to tissues from having repeat injections of corticosteroid.

Will it hurt?

They can be a bit uncomfortable at the time of the injection, but many people find that they are not as bad as they initially feared.





What happens when I have a Corticosteroid injection?

The Consultant in Sports and Exercise Medicine, who will be performing your injection, will choose the most appropriate injection for your condition and also discuss the price and alternatives to the injection.

An ultrasound scan is usually used at the time of the injection to guide the injection and confirm it is in the joint. (On occasion this is not required and your Consultant will discuss this with you).

What happens after the injection?

The local anaesthetic used to prepare the injection will relieve some of your pain within minutes, but the effect may wear off after an hour or two. It usually takes at least 10 days for the effect of the corticosteroid to begin to work and we expect it to continue to have a positive effect for between 3 and 12 months. We usually advise that you have someone drive you home after the injection as the joint may feel stiff, but it is not mandatory, if you can wait an hour or so in the clinic after injection.



You may feel sore at the injection site for the next 2-4 days. For the first 24 hours, if needed, you may apply ice to the site for 10 minutes every hour to decrease pain, or take a pain killer such as Paracetamol.

Risks and Side effects

Below is a summary of the risks/side effects from having a corticosteroid injection:

- Serious side effects are rare but can include:
- Joint and soft tissue infections 1 in 25,000.
- Anaphylaxis (allergic reaction)

Other potential side effects include:

- Post-injection flare of pain at injection site.
- Injury or trauma to neurovascular structures during the injection procedure.

You will be asked to remain in the clinic for an hour following the injection to allow observation for possible adverse reactions. We will show you an exercise program either before the injection or after that we would like you to carry out starting 5 days post injection.

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Gulliver's Retail Park, Northwood, Dublin

 (00) 353 1526 2030
 sportsmedicine@sportsurgeryclinic.com
 sscsportsmedicine.com
 @sscsportsmedicine

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