



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Corticosteroid Injection Therapy

Issued by Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust





Introduction

The purpose of this leaflet is to give information about corticosteroid injection therapy.

Injection therapy is used for patients who are experiencing pain which has not responded to oral medication or other therapies and require further pain relief.

A corticosteroid is a medicine that can relieve swelling, stiffness and pain by reducing inflammation for example in the joints, tendons or tendon sheaths.

There are times when you should not have this type of injection, for example if you:

- Have any infection on your skin or anywhere else in your body
- Are allergic to local anaesthetic, steroid or any components of the injection
- Feel unwell
- Are due to have surgery at that area
- Are under 18
- Do not want the injection.

Benefits

- The aim of a corticosteroid injection is to reduce your pain.

How is the injection given?

Your skin will be cleaned with antiseptic, a needle will be gently inserted into the affected body part and the solution will be injected through the needle. This might be uncomfortable but will settle quickly.

How fast does the injection work?

If local anaesthetic is also used your pain should be less within a few minutes. However, it may return after about an hour just as when you visit the dentist. The steroid usually doesn't start to work immediately and can take longer before it starts having an effect.

What you should do after an injection

Tendons can be slightly weakened following steroid injection therefore you should aim to take relative rest for about 3 weeks which should reduce your risk of further tendon injury / rupture. If the injection has been given for joint pain you can start early gentle movement.

Side effects and risks

- **Infection** is quite rare. If the area becomes hot, red, swollen and painful soon after the injection you should contact your GP/ out of hours service immediately.
- **Allergy** is also rare. You will be asked to wait for 10 minutes after the injection to ensure there is no allergic reaction to the drug.
- **Post injection pain flare** might be experienced once the anaesthetic has worn off (6-12 hours after the injection). This normally resolves in less than 72 hours and you can take painkillers to help ease the pain.
- **Tendon weakening / rupture** - it is important to take relative rest as discussed by your clinician.
- **Impaired diabetic control** - Diabetic patients may notice a temporary increase in blood sugar levels and should manage appropriately.
- **Menstrual irregularity / vaginal bleeding** - contact your GP.
- **Skin changes** - loss of skin colour / fat loss around the injection site.
- **Facial flushing** - This can occur quite quickly following injection and can last for up to 2 days. There are no long-term side effects.
- **Bruising** - if you are taking blood thinning drugs there may be some temporary bruising.

Alternatives to corticosteroid injection therapy

You can take anti-inflammatory tablets but the side effects of these are much more common and can cause stomach upsets.

Heat and cold packs are other pain relieving treatments which may also be beneficial.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is this the same drug that athletes and bodybuilders take?

No. The steroids used clinically are completely different and are extremely safe.

How long does the effect last?

This varies from person to person and the condition being treated but the steroid usually continues working for 6-12 weeks.

How many injections can I have?

This depends on the part of the body involved and will be decided jointly by you and your clinician. We know that there are some detrimental effects of the injection on the cartilage of joints and tendons so we prefer to use them sparingly to help minimise these effects.

Contacts

If you have any questions or need further information about this treatment please contact your therapist:

Therapy Department:.....

Contact number:.....

Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on **03 44 811 8118**

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: **0800 032 0202**

Text: 01670 511098

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

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General Enquiries **03 44 811 8111**

www.northumbria.nhs.uk

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