

Steroid (cortisone) injections

The aim of this leaflet is to provide an overview of steroid injections and to answer some of the common questions. It does not aim to substitute for a thorough discussion with your surgeon.

Background

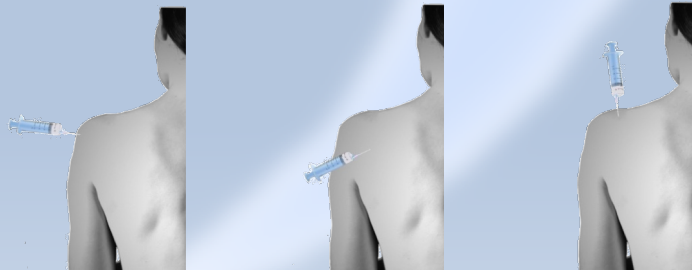
Steroid injections are used throughout the body, both for diagnostic (to help confirm a diagnosis) and therapeutic (to provide symptomatic relief) purposes.

What is in the injection ?

The injection usually contains local anaesthetic and steroid, although the particular types of both of these can vary.

Site of injection

The site of injection is very important. In both the elbow and shoulder there are several different areas that can be injected, and in the hand and wrist, even more.



Risk of steroid injections

Injections are low risk but can cause: infection, skin depigmentation, dimpling from fat necrosis, tendon or nerve injury, soft tissue calcification, an allergic reaction, and increased pain. They can also upset glucose control in diabetics, so closer sugar monitoring is advisable following a steroid injection. People have also reported facial flushing, menstrual cycle disturbance, mood changes and in rare cases heart irregularity and seizures. Multiple injections in the same place can adversely effect the joint or tendon where the injection is put.

Effect of an injection

The injection may have no effect on you, or you may have an improvement. The improvement may come on quickly but often fades quickly as the local anaesthetic wears off. The pain may actually be worse for the following few days before the steroid has a chance to start working.

What to do after an injection ?

It is important to keep track of the effects of the injection, both immediately in the first couple of hours and in the longer term (after a week or two). If you are being seen back in the clinic after an injection you will be asked about the effect that the injection had on your symptoms. You may find it helpful to write down how it affected your pain and movement. For instance, "By what percentage did your pain reduce following the injection ?" and "How long did that improvement last for ?"