

**Steroid Injections**

**Steroid injections are known to be a useful treatment for pain, swelling and stiffness within a joint or soft tissues.** The area is injected with corticosteroid and may or may not include local aneasthetic. The anaesthetic aims to reduce the pain initially for 30 minutes and may last up to a few hours and the corticosteroid aims to reduce the inflammation within the first week but may in some cases take up to 6 weeks for the effects of the injection to start working. The response to the injection varies from person to person but can last from several weeks to many months.

**Is there anything we need to know before a steroid injection?**

**There are several health conditions for which an injection of steroid and anaesthetic is not appropriate.** Please let us know of any of the following **before** you attend the clinic for an injection and a clinician will discuss these with you:

**• Any open wounds** such as leg ulcers or cellulitis

**• Recent trauma** at the site of the injection within 6 weeks e.g. fracture

• **An artificial joint** or metalwork in the area to be injected

• A known or suspected **infection** or on **any antibiotic treatment** for an infection or within 2 weeks of stopping. We would not inject into a previously infected joint

• **Allergy or adverse reaction** to local anaesthetic or steroid injections

• **On immunosuppressant drugs** e.g. for HIV or arthritis or **Oral Steroids** above 5mg daily

• You have **active cancer** or **are receiving any chemotherapy** treatment for cancer

• **Taking a blood thinner** or a bleeding disorder e.g. Apixaban. Please notify us as you may need to take your blood thinners slightly earlier or later than usual to reduce the risk of bleeding with an injection

• **You have uncontrolled diabetes, epilepsy or high blood pressure**

• **You are pregnant** or breast feeding

• **You have had a live vaccine** within the past 4 weeks or COVID booster in the last 2 weeks.

• **You have or have had tuberculosis (TB)** in the past

**• You have glaucoma** (you should check with your opthalmologist)

**• You have acute psychosis** or previous steroid induced psychosis

**•** You have had or are awaiting any **surgery within 6 weeks**

**What are the Potential Side Effects?**

**Side effects of a steroid injection are rare. Your clinician will discuss the side effects with you at the time of the injection.**

**Flare Up** Affects about 1 in 10 people. Occasionally people notice a flare in their joint pain within the first 24 hours after an injection. This usually settles on its own within a couple of days. Take your usual pain killers to relieve symptoms.

**Infection** Very rarely infection might be introduced at the time of an injection (estimated as 1 in 23,000 people). If the joint or area becomes more painful and hot, red, or swollen you may be developing an infection. You should see your doctor immediately or if this is not possible go to A&E.

**Skin changes** Occasionally some paler skin or dimpling may occur at the injection site and may be permenant. This is more likely to happen if you have a higher dose of steroid.

**Facial Flushing** Steroid injections may sometimes cause facial flushing or interfere with the menstrual cycle making them irregular temporarily. Consult your GP if concerned, or if it persists.

**Mood Change** Treatment with steroids may cause changes in mood – either elation or depression. This may be more common in people with a previous history of mood disturbance. If you have concerns, please discuss this with your doctor.

**Change in Glycaemic Control** People with diabetes may find that the steroid injection affects their blood sugar control; you may notice a temporary blood sugar rise. It is recommended that you check your blood levels more regularly; it may take between 1-3 weeks for them to settle.

**What Should I Expect after my Joint Injection?**

**• We may advise you spend up to 30 minutes resting** in the clinic waiting area and make sure you feel well before you leave. Report to reception if you feel unwell.

**• You should not drive if you experience any numbness, weakness, or pain flare-up that affects your ability to control the vehicle safely.** Please consider bringing someone with you to avoid having to drive yourself home immediately after.

**• Avoid strenuous activity** for the rest of the day.

**• The injected area may be numb** for up to 24 hours.

**• The injected site may be sore** for one to two days as explained in the side effects.

**• Do not use heat pads or any other form of heat on the injection site** for two days following the injection. You may however choose to use an ice pack on the injection site for pain.

**• For a weight bearing joint we recommend that you rest and gently potter at home** for 2 days after your injection to improve the likelihood of a good response.

**• You may develop a bruise** at the injection site.

**• Most people notice improvement in their pain in 2 weeks.** Maximum improvement of your pain may take up to 6 weeks following your injection.

**• If you are having a vaccination within 4 weeks of your injection**, please contact your GP

**IMPORTANT: If you develop a rash or if the injection site is red, hot, swollen, or painful, you may be developing an infection**. Please contact the musculoskeletal team, or your GP. If you are unable to contact either of these and continue to have concerns, please go to A&E.

**Follow up after injection is not required in most cases**, however, your clinician may organise follow up rehabilitation with you after your injection. If you do not benefit from your injection or have any queries, contact SMSKH for reassessment. Your records are kept open for a year should you need to contact us.