

Steroid Injection

Patient Information Sheet

Steroid injections are also known as cortisone injections, Kenacort injections and corticosteroid injections. This document discusses low-dose injections given up to a few times per year. Steroid injections are used to treat painful conditions of the joints and soft tissues such as bursitis, tennis elbow, inflammation caused by arthritis and some nerve problems such as carpal tunnel syndrome. Steroid injections provide prolonged relief of inflammatory pain particularly when used with the guidance of your physiotherapist or osteopath. Steroid injections are generally very safe and well tolerated. Steroid injections are safe during pregnancy and whilst breast feeding.

How do they work?

Steroid injections work by delivering a powerful anti-inflammatory directly to the painful area. The steroid may take a few days to become effective but may give sustained relief. Usually only one injection is required but sometimes several are required over several months to relieve the condition.

What will happen?

We will discuss the procedure and outcomes and provide an opportunity to ask questions and your consent will be required. The doctor will clean and scan the affected area prior to performing the injection.

What will you feel?

The needle which is very small is guided into the area of inflammation. Local anaesthetic is mixed with the steroid so that the area goes numb after the injection.

After the injection

The local anaesthetic wears off within a few hours and the injected area may be sorer for 24 to 48 hours. Rest, compresses and paracetamol will help relieve this pain. Your doctor may prescribe some oral pain relief or anti-inflammatory medication to take while waiting for the steroid to take effect. Avoid strenuous activity after the procedure but as a guide if an activity is not painful before the procedure it is probably safe to continue after the procedure. Elderly patients and others receiving; hand, elbow and foot injections may require a driver to transport them home after.

If you are not already seeing a physio / osteopath, long term benefit from the injection will be enhanced by a rehabilitation programme commencing a week after the injection.

Although uncommon you may experience minor reactions to the injection such as:

- Bruising or bleeding at the site of injection, which is generally minor.
- People with diabetes may get a transient rise in blood sugar levels and need to monitor their blood sugar levels closely over the next few days.
- Superficial injections may rarely result in thinning or pallor of the skin or local fat loss. This is not painful and mostly returns to normal after a few months.
- The injection can cause hot flushes which can last for two days.

More serious problems

These are all very unlikely but do occur occasionally. If you have any concerns about a possible adverse reaction to the injection, please discuss this with your GP.

- *Infection* - Infection is very uncommon but may be present as pain, heat, redness and swelling. If you feel unwell you should see your GP as soon as possible.
- *Cartilage and tendon damage* - Frequent injections into weight bearing joints can cause cartilage damage. Injections are rarely put into large tendons, such as the Achilles tendon in view of the concerns that the medication may weaken the tendon.

Effects on the rest of the body

The steroids from the injection are absorbed over time and are a low dose compared with these taken as pills for medical problems and side effects are highly unlikely with single or even a few injections.

Other do's or don'ts after an injection

- Do keep taking all usual medication unless told otherwise by our doctor.
- Do get immunised as usual.
- You don't need to alter your alcohol intake up or down.

Appointments

You or your referrer can phone or email with your referral form to make a booking for a steroid injection. If you have any further questions about steroid injections or wish to make an appointment, please phone 07 929 4151 or email office@theultrasoundclinic.co.nz or book online at www.theultrasoundclinic.co.nz