

Soft tissue and joint injections

Pre-injection Information Leaflet

Your healthcare professional has booked you in for a joint and soft tissue injection.

What is a steroid injection?

- Steroids are medicines that can reduce swelling and pain (inflammation). They are called anti-inflammatories.
- The steroid injection goes straight into the part of your body where it is needed.
- The steroid injection is often given with a local anaesthetic. This deals with any pain you might be feeling.

What are the benefits of the steroid injection?

- The injection should help lower pain and swelling in the area.
- When the joint or tissue feels better, it can help you move more normally again and do your physio or strengthening exercises.
- The injection helps give you a better chance to heal.
- Before, the pain may have stopped you from moving normally or doing your exercises, but the injection can make it easier to get back to those activities.

Do steroid injections just mask the pain?

- Steroid injections are powerful anti-inflammatories. They remove inflammation.
- However, sometimes inflammation can return.
- Not all pain is from inflammation. Some pain can be more mechanical (relating to movement or positioning).
- If it is mechanical, a steroid injection will not help, and other medication may be needed.

What are the risks?

As with any injection, there are some small risks.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/steroid-injections/#side-effects>

These are:

- A small amount of bleeding and bruising which will usually go away without any treatment.
- Infection. If the area becomes hot, swollen and painful for more than 24 hours, you should be seen by a doctor straight away.
- Some people report an increase in pain for 24 to 48 hours after the injection. This is called a 'steroid flare'. This is not an infection.
- It will usually go away with treatments such as cool packs and painkillers. Always read the medicine information of painkillers. Do not take more than the recommended dose.
- There is a small risk of damage to nearby tendons or tissues. We use an ultrasound machine to guide the needle which reduces the risk.
- Women may notice that their menstrual cycle (periods) becomes irregular for a few months.
- If you are a diabetic, you may notice an increase in blood glucose levels. This is usually temporary.
- Some people experience facial flushing (face goes red) after the injection.
- Some people experience skin depigmentation. Their skin may become lighter at or near the injection site.
- A dimple developing due to fat loss in the area.

What are the alternatives?

- Tablets (pain killers): These have side effects which will affect your whole system (digestive system, liver/kidney, breathing, etc).
- Physiotherapy or the use of devices such as splints or braces.

- You will probably have already tried these before a steroid injection is offered.
- If you do not feel a steroid injection is right for you, please let us know and we can write back to your referring healthcare professional.

Who performs the injection?

- The injection will be performed by a Physiotherapist – a specialist in musculoskeletal problems, which means they focus on your muscles, bones, joints, and connective tissues.

Preparing for an injection

Please tell the Physiotherapist doing your injection if you:

- Had the same procedure in the last three months
- You have a joint replacement, implant, or another object in the area being treated
- Have planned surgery or dental procedures in the next two weeks
- Have recently received a live vaccine in the last two weeks
- Have an infection at the moment
- Are an unstable diabetic or have a serious cardiac condition
- Have any allergies
- Are taking any anticoagulation (blood thinning) medication for example: warfarin, aspirin, clopidogrel, rivaroxaban
- Are taking antiretroviral medication for HIV (e.g. ritonavir or cobicistat)
- Are taking bupropion (Zyban).

What happens if I am late for my appointment?

- The appointment last 30mins.
- There is a very short time space until the next patient arrives for their appointment.
- If you are too late there may not be time to carry out the procedure or the checks and reporting that is needed.

- It is unfair that the next patient is affected because you arrived late. Please be considerate of this.

If you are late for your appointment, we may not be able to see you, and we reserve the right to cancel or rebook the appointment.

What happens during the injection procedure?

- You will lie or sit on a couch. The health professional may use an ultrasound machine to find the exact place to give the steroid injection.
- They will then clean your skin with a sterile solution. In some cases, we give people a local anaesthetic.
- The procedure lasts between 15 and 30 minutes.

What happens after the injection?

- See our aftercare injection information on our website:
<http://msk.whittington.nhs.uk/>

Do I need a referral for an injection?

- Yes, to have an Injection on the NHS you will need a referral from a clinician like your GP, a Musculoskeletal Physiotherapist or a Consultant.

Can I drive after my injection?

- Yes, you can usually drive after the procedure, unless your Physiotherapist tells you not to.
- Other reasons for not driving might be that you get light-headed or dizzy with injections.
- If the injection is in your hand or foot, it might feel numb for a few hours (like after the dentist). You should think about this before driving.
- It is always helpful to have someone with you who can drive, just in case you are unable to. You could also use a taxi or come by public transport.

Do I need to give written consent?

- By coming to the appointment and agreeing to the injection, you are giving permission for it, since your healthcare professional already referred you.
- If you change your mind on the day and do not want the injection, that's okay. Just tell the staff, and they will refer you back to your Doctor.

Can I find out more?

You can find out more from the following weblinks:

<http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/arthritis-information/drugs/local-steroid-injections.aspx>

[Other useful information \(including helpful exercises\):](#)

<http://msk.whittington.nhs.uk/>

Contact our service

MSK CATS and Physiotherapy Services

Tel.: 020 7288 3317 Email: whh-tr.mskinterfaceservice@nhs.net

Contact our Trust

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern, please contact our Patient advice and liaison service (PALS) on **020 7288 5551** or whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net.

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet, please email whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net. We will try our best to meet your needs.

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