



# Steroid Injections

## A guide for patients

### What is a steroid injection?

You may need a steroid joint injection if you are suffering from a sports injury, a repetitive strain injury, or an inflammatory disease such as arthritis.

The steroids used in joint injections are called corticosteroids. These are synthetic drugs that are very similar to cortisone, a hormone that your body produces naturally to help reduce inflammation, swelling and pain within a joint. Corticosteroids are not the same as the steroids abused by some athletes.

### How quickly will the steroid injection work and how long will the effect last?

The time that a joint injection takes to work often varies between patients and conditions. However, an improvement in the joint is usually noticed 2 days after the injection. The effect normally lasts from few weeks to several months, but once again this varies from patient to patient.

### What side effects might I experience?

Whilst side effects are unlikely, some patients occasionally experience facial flushing. This soon passes and is nothing to worry about. Sometimes, patients may notice a flare in the joint pain during first 24 hours after injection, but again this normally subsides and should not be a cause for concern. It's usual to see a rise in blood sugar levels for a few days after the injection. Injections can occasionally cause some thinning or changes in the colour of the skin at the injection site. An injury to the blood vessel, nerve or tendon may occur if injection is near these structures. Very rarely an infection can occur. If the joint becomes more painful or feels hot, you should contact your doctor straight away.

### How long should I rest for after an injection?

You should usually try and rest the affected joint for 2 days after an injection.

### Will the joint injection be painful?

A joint injection isn't usually a very painful procedure. However, the level of pain experienced can vary between patients and conditions. This is why your doctor may decide to give you an injection of the local anaesthetic to numb the area and reduce the pain of the injection. The anaesthetic may be given separately, or at the same time as the joint injection.