

## FAQs:

### Can I drive after the injection?

Not on that day, as having a medical procedure such as an injection could impair your ability to safely control your vehicle – please arrange alternative transport.

### How many injections can I have?

You can have a couple of joints done at the same time e.g. both knees, however many choose to leave a gap between injections. You can have a maximum of 3 injections in a joint in a single year and maximum 5 in the lifetime of that joint. Each injection is considered on an individual basis. Repeat injections are minimum 6 weeks apart.

### When can I return to sport?

Minimum 2 weeks post injection.

### Can I perform normal, light daily activities after the injection?

Yes, just nothing strenuous for 2 days and nothing heavy or high intensity for 2 weeks.

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## Patient Information Leaflet Corticosteroid Injections

### What is a Corticosteroid injection for?

We have offered you an injection of corticosteroid into your joint or soft tissue. This is a powerful anti-inflammatory that we use in MSK medicine to help relieve pain, swelling and other symptoms, and on occasion it is used to help confirm a diagnosis. It can be offered with or without local anaesthetic, depending upon the circumstances.

When used, local anaesthetic (lidocaine) can numb the area within seconds and can give symptom relief for up a number of hours.

The steroid is slower release, so it can take up to 4 weeks for you to experience the full benefit.

Whilst the chemical effect of the injection is over by 4 weeks, the improvement can last for many months. It is important to understand that a corticosteroid injection is not a long term solution, but is used as an adjunct to help you engage with conservative management strategies, such as physiotherapy exercises, weight loss and lifestyle advice. These are often aimed at dealing with the root cause of the issue and are therefore more important in long term management or preventing recurrence of symptoms.

### Does it hurt?

Some people find the injection painful, but this subsides quickly and most patients are surprised at how little discomfort they experience.

### What are the risks and common side effects?

The vast majority of corticosteroid injections are event free. However there are some rare but potentially serious and even life-threatening side effects and you must be aware of these risks in order to inform you in your choice to have an injection with us.

- 1.) Post-injection you may have **increased pain** for up to 72 hours. You can take your normal prescribed pain medications while you wait for this to settle.
- 2.) Skin directly around the injection can rarely lighten in colour and you can lose some of the fatty tissue under the skin in that region, causing a **small dip**.
- 3.) **Bleeding and bruising** around the injection site.
- 4.) Diabetics can experience **fluctuations** in their blood sugar levels for a few days.
- 5.) Some women experience a short period of **menstrual irregularity**.
- 6.) **Facial flushing** (redness) can occur for a few weeks after injection in rare cases.
- 7.) **Infection** from the injection. This is rare (less than 1 in 17,000) as we use a clean 'non-touch technique'.

If you notice any swelling, redness, weeping or heat around the injection site or develop a fever in the 2 weeks post injection you should contact your GP or local hospital and explain you have recently had a steroid injection in that region.

- 8.) **Tendon damage** where injections are near or around tendons they may weaken the capacity of the tendon tissue, making it more prone to rupture or tearing. We therefore advise 2 days of rest post injection and 2 weeks of avoiding heavy or high intensity exercise or activity.
- 9.) **Anaphylaxis**. This is a rare allergic reaction to the ingredients of an injection that can be life-threatening. There is always immediate medical assistance available on site at our injection clinics. You are asked to wait in the waiting room for 30 mins post injection to monitor you for any adverse reactions.
- 10.) **Arthropathy**. Some research suggests steroid injections are potentially damaging to the cells which repair and regenerate cartilage, so multiple injections may not be healthy for your joints.
- 11.) **Suppression of immune response**. Corticosteroids are known to have an immunosuppressive effect. The dose in an injection is small but may have systemic effects. We do not know how significant these are, but as it may effect how our body responds to vaccines there is a recommendation that we do not inject steroid within a certain time period surrounding a vaccination.

There may also be a slightly greater risk of more severe effects if catching an illness such as COVID-19 around the time of a steroid injection.