

Information for patients

# Shoulder, elbow, wrist and hand joint and soft tissue steroid injection



## Hand and Upper Limb

## What are the injections for?

Joint and soft tissue injections can be administered as treatments to help reduce both swelling and pain in the affected joint or area. It may be offered to you if other treatments such as pain killing tablets, physiotherapy or use of splints have failed to provide sufficient relief. Injections can be used as a procedure to help the team decide where the pain is coming from, and can be used in conjunction with physiotherapy to improve function.

## What does it involve?

Your consultant or a trained member of the upper limb team will carry out the injection after you have given your verbal consent. Your skin may be marked with a pen and will be cleaned with alcohol-based antiseptic solution. The injection is carried out using sterile techniques to minimise infection. The area will be injected with steroid +/- local anaesthetic. Once the injection is complete, please wait for 30 minutes in the hospital. We may reassess the early response to the injection. You can drive 30 minutes after you have the injection, providing you feel well and you have had no negative reaction.

If in doubt, a future appointment can be arranged for you to have the injection when someone is available to accompany you. You will have a follow up appointment with a member of the upper limb team to assess your response to the injection.

**Prior to the injection, inform your clinician if any of the following apply:**

- You take blood thinning medication
- You are on a course of antibiotics, have recently finished a course of antibiotics or feel that you have an infection in your body at the present time
- You have any known allergies
- You are due to have a vaccination within two weeks of the procedure, this can be either before or after

## After care

The joint may become uncomfortable once the local anaesthetic has worn off, usually within 24 hours. This discomfort can last up to three days and is nothing to worry about. During this time you can take your normal pain relief such as paracetamol or anti-inflammatories. You could also apply an ice/ cold pack to the area that was injected. Place a cold damp cloth next to the skin under the ice pack to protect the skin. **We advise you to reduce the activity of your arm for seven to ten days to allow the injection time to take effect.** The benefit of the injection varies from person to person. If after six weeks you have had no pain relief, it is unlikely to improve.

## What are the risks and complications of a steroid injection?

- If you are diabetic, you may have high blood sugars for 2 weeks after the injection
- You may also experience flushing or redness of your face. This would be short lasting in the first few days.
- Dimpling, skin discolouration and bruising may occur at the site of injection
- Allergic reaction is very uncommon
- Rarely, patients may get a serious infection after the injection

## After 48 hours if you:

- Have a temperature, feel cold or have shivers, feel lethargic or generally unwell
- Or if your joint is unusually hot/warm, red, swollen or more painful than normal
- Or if you have any concerns or worries after your injection

Please contact the upper limb secretaries on **01691 404000** during Monday to Friday office hours. At night or weekends, contact the hospital on **01691 404000** and ask for the registrar on call.

## Further information:

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/steroid-injections](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/steroid-injections)

## If you require a special edition of this leaflet

This leaflet is available in large print. Arrangements can also be made on request for it to be explained in your preferred language. Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) email: [rjah.pals.office@nhs.net](mailto:rjah.pals.office@nhs.net)

## Feedback

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Please send your comments to the Patient Advice and  
Liaison Service (PALS) email: [rjah.pals.office@nhs.net](mailto:rjah.pals.office@nhs.net)

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