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Information for patients

Shoulder, elbow, wrist and hand joint injection



Hand and Upper Limb

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What are the injections for?

Joint injections are often beneficial in reducing both swelling and pain in the affected joint. 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, or can be used as a procedure to help decide if the pain is coming from within your joint. Steroid injections may provide long lasting pain relief.

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, (see risks and complications below) Your skin will be cleaned with antiseptic solution. The joint will be injected with steroid and local anaesthetic. The steroid will help to reduce the swelling in your joint whilst the local anaesthetic will help with discomfort. Once the injection is complete, please wait for 10-15 minutes in the department. After this time we will check that you feel well enough to leave the clinic. Providing you feel well and you have had no negative reaction, such as increased pain, fainting or dizziness, you can drive after 30 minutes of your injection. If in doubt we recommend that you DO NOT drive for 24 hours.

You will have a follow up by a member of the upper limb team to assess your response to the injection.

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 an anti-inflammatory. You could also apply ice to the area that was injected, but **DO NOT APPLY ICE DIRECTLY TO THE SKIN**. We advise you to reduce the activity of your joint for seven to ten days. You may need a sick note for work and these can be issued in clinic. The benefit of the injection varies from person to person and the steroid should start to take effect in 5-7 days. If after six weeks you have had no pain relief in your joint, 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 a few days after the injection
- You may also experience flushing or redness of your face.
- Bruising, and permanent dimpling, and skin discoloration (blanching) may occur at the site of injection.
- Pain to the joint may fail to improve.

Rarely, patients may get serious infection after the injection.

If after 48 hours 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

During office hours, Monday to Friday, please contact the Upper limb Nurse practitioner on bleep **321** or the consultants secretary, **01691 404000**
Night time or weekends contact the Surgical doctor on call for the hospital for advice.