

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Local steroid injection

The aim of this leaflet is to provide patients undergoing a local steroid injection with additional information before their appointment.

When attending for your appointment, please leave any valuables at home. You are responsible for all personal items you bring into hospital and the Trust cannot accept responsibility for their loss or damage.

What is a local steroid injection?

Local steroid is injected into the joints of patients who have rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis and other similar conditions. The steroid should reduce the swelling and ease the pain. Sometimes the injection is also given into the tissue around the joint to help conditions such as tennis elbow.

What do I need to do prior to the procedure?

You may take all medication as normal before the injection.

If you are taking blood thinning drugs, for example Warfarin, you must inform us and bring your monitoring book showing your most recent INR result. You should also arrange a repeat INR blood test three days after the injection.

There is no other preparation for this procedure. You can eat and drink as normal.

You must inform us if there are any signs of infection in the joint before we inject it.

You may be asked to change into a hospital gown.

How is the injection performed?

The injection is performed by a specially trained doctor or sonographer who will explain the procedure to you, answer any questions you may have and confirm you are happy to proceed.

Your skin will be cleaned with antiseptic solution and local anaesthetic may be injected to anaesthetise the area. The injection is often performed using ultrasound or fluoroscopy x-rays.

A fine needle will then be inserted into the joint so that the local steroid can be injected. A plaster is then applied, which may be removed the day after your procedure.

What are the benefits from the injection?

If you have local anaesthetic, it should give you almost instant relief from your pain.

This will last for one to two hours. The steroid will take longer to ease your pain and you may not feel the benefit for a day or two. You may take pain relief such as paracetamol, or use ice packs during this time.

The relief you feel from the injection lasts for an average of three months but can be more or less as all patients react differently.

Usually you may have a maximum of three injections per year.

What are the risks from the procedure?

Generally a local steroid injection is a very safe procedure.

A few patients may notice that their joint worsens initially, but this should settle within a couple of days.

The skin at the injection site may change colour (depigmentation). This may take a while to fade or may even be a permanent effect.

Female patients may experience a change in their menstrual cycle following the injection. If this doesn't return to normal within a couple of months, please seek advice from your doctor.

Frequent repeat injections risk cartilage damage, especially in weight-bearing joints.

The procedure is performed under sterile conditions so the risk of infection is minimised (1 in 20,000).

Signs of infection are a high temperature and the joint becoming more painful, swollen, hot or red. Please seek treatment from your GP or attend your nearest Emergency Department if any of these symptoms occur.

On very rare occasions a patient may have an allergic reaction to the steroid. There may be a rash at the injection site, the face might swell and the patient may have difficulty breathing. If this happens to you, you will be treated immediately.

If you experience any of these symptoms when you get home, you should go to your nearest Emergency Department. It is very rare for this to occur.

What happens afterwards?

Once we are sure you are feeling well you will be allowed home.

It is important that you do not drive for at least four hours following this procedure, please arrange for someone to collect you.

What should I do when I get home?

You should use the joint as normal following the injection, but avoid all strenuous exercise for 48 hours. Do not push or lift heavy objects for at least one week.

What if I suffer from diabetes?

If you suffer from diabetes the steroid can cause your blood sugar to rise. You will need to check your blood more often for a week after the injection and you may need to increase your insulin. Contact your diabetes specialist if you need further advice.

Contact details

If you require any further information before your appointment date, you may contact the x-ray department on 01623 672202 between 9am and 5pm.

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet (if relevant) please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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