



Injection of Corticosteroids

Things to know:

The purpose of this injection is to provide strong anti-inflammatory activity to a localized area and provide pain reduction or relief. Corticosteroids are not pain relievers, they reduce inflammation. When corticosteroids relieve pain it is because they have relieved the inflammation in the area.

The corticosteroid is mixed with local anesthetics before being injected, often times lidocaine and/or marcaine. These medicines quickly numb the area and often times provide an additional 2 to 4 hours of relief. Corticosteroids can provide increasing relief for up to 6 weeks. Some studies have shown it is not safe to have more than 3 injections in the same joint within a one-year-period, or roughly one injection per joint every 4 months.

After the injection:

Do not resume normal exercises or physical therapy for 72 hours following the injection. Do not over use the joint even though it may be relatively pain free. It is important to perform gentle and frequent range of motion for the injected joint.

Side effects of corticosteroid injections:

Some side effects of corticosteroids can include,

- An elevation in blood sugar levels if you have diabetes

- A localized increase in pain at the injection site often called a “steroid flare”

- Retention of fluids

These side effects are not serious and will normally pass with time. If needed ice may be applied to the injection site or medicines such as Advil, Ibuprofen, or Tylenol may be used as needed and if tolerated.

More serious side effects include infection or allergic reaction to the medication used for the injection. An infection would be extremely rare. Signs of infection include heat, increasing pain, red streaks traveling up from the injection site, feeling systemically ill, and a temperature above 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

A true allergic reaction can occur after the use of any medicine, symptoms may include a rash, nausea, swelling, shortness of breath, and anaphylaxis. Any of these symptoms are possible but would be extremely rare after a corticosteroid injection.

The information contained in this handout is intended to inform and educate, it is in no way meant to replace medical evaluations, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.