

# Steroid Injections: What You Need to Know

Steroid injections are a highly effective treatment for managing inflamed joints and soft tissues. These injections work by reducing inflammation and alleviating pain. Your clinician will carefully choose the most suitable injection for your specific condition, and in some cases, it may include a local anaesthetic to enhance your comfort during the procedure.

## Post-Injection Considerations

After receiving a steroid injection, it's important to allow some time for recovery. Your clinician will provide detailed guidance on what you should do, which may include rest or adjustments to your activities. Please follow their recommendations closely.

## Potential Side Effects

While steroid injections can provide relief, they do come with some potential side effects. Your clinician will discuss these risks with you, which may include:

- Localised pain at the injection site for up to 48 hours. You can use your usual pain relief methods during this period.
- Though rare (less than 1 in 10,000 cases), an infection is a possibility. If you notice pain persisting or worsening more than 48 hours after the injection, along with symptoms like localized heat, redness, swelling, or fever, seek medical advice promptly. You can contact your GP surgery, an out-of-hours GP, the NHS Walk-in Centre, or the Minor Injuries Unit.
- Steroid injections may occasionally lead to tendon damage. Your clinician will assess the safety of injecting near tendons on a case-by-case basis.
- Localised fat loss in the tissue can occur, resulting in dimpling or reduced shock absorption, especially when injected into the heel or ball of the foot.
- Skin colour changes or thinning of the skin at the injection site are possible side effects.
- Patients with diabetes may experience temporary fluctuations in blood sugar levels for up to 3 weeks following local steroid injections.

- While rare, adverse reactions to the local anesthetic and steroid can occur. You'll be advised to remain in the waiting area for 15 minutes after the injection to ensure immediate medical assistance is available if needed.
- Bleeding into the joint or surrounding tissues may occur, particularly in individuals taking blood-thinning medications or those with blood clotting disorders.
- Some individuals may experience facial flushing 24 to 48 hours after the injection, but it should resolve within a day or two.
- Pre- or post-menopausal individuals may experience spotting or uterine bleeding, as steroids can temporarily reactivate dormant hormones. If you observe this, consult your GP, as it may not be related to the injection.

## Further Advice and Monitoring

Your clinician will have reviewed your medical history to minimize the risk of adverse reactions. However, if you notice bleeding, pain, swelling, redness, warmth around the injection site, or feel generally unwell, seek prompt medical attention and inform them about the injection.

Additionally, a survey will be sent to you six weeks after the injection to assess its effects and provide any necessary follow-up advice or treatment.

## Returning Home

When you return home, please refer to the information above regarding potential side effects, particularly the sections on 'Infection' and 'Hypersensitivity/Allergic Reactions.' If you experience any of the listed symptoms, follow the instructions for seeking further medical advice.

## Questions or Concerns

If you have any questions or uncertainties about your symptoms, please don't hesitate to call your GP surgery. Outside of regular hours, you can also contact your GP practice, the nearest Accident & Emergency Department, or the NHS 111 helpline, available 24/7, for guidance and assistance.