

Steroid injections for foot and ankle conditions

Trauma and Orthopaedics

Information for patients and carers

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What is a steroid injection?

A steroid is an anti-inflammatory, which is injected into the painful joint or joints in the foot and ankle. This will reduce the swelling and stiffness within the joint and, as a result, reduce pain.



Why do I need joint injections?

Joint injections are given to help the medication get into the joints. They provide effective treatment for swelling, stiffness and pain, which can be caused by conditions such as:

- rheumatoid arthritis
- osteoarthritis
- synovitis
- gout

What does the injection involve?

The injection is performed under **local anaesthetic** or **general anaesthetic** (a combination of medicines that brings on a sleep-like state) as a day case.

A syringe and needle are used to inject the steroid with some local anaesthetic into the painful joints, this is done using an X-ray. This makes sure that the medication is injected in the correct area of pain.

What should I expect after the injection?

The local anaesthetic and the steroid that is injected can leave you feeling pain free when you wake up. This may last for several hours until the local anaesthetic has worn off. The steroid can take several days to work. You may find that you still need to take your regular pain medication during this time.

Do I need to rest after the injection?

You should rest the joint for several days after the injection to give the steroid time to take effect. However, it is important **not** to completely rest the joint by preventing it from moving.

A general rule is to move and walk as normal, but do not do any demanding activities or exercise for up to a week following the injection.

You should avoid driving on the day of the injection.

The steroid injection can work for 3 to 6 months and sometimes longer. For some people it may last this long. If you have had previous steroid injections, it may not last as long as it has done before.

What are the risks and side effects?

There are some risks and side effects to having a steroid injection, although they are rare. These include:

A flare up of your symptoms – this usually settles after a couple of days as the steroid begins to take effect.

Infection – this is very rare (approximately 1 in 20,000). The risk is reduced by using antiseptic skin cleaner before injecting and good sterile techniques.

Diabetics – may notice an increase in their blood sugars for 3 to 5 days.

Allergic reaction to the drugs – you will be asked about any known allergies and will be monitored in case of a reaction.

Other very rare side effects include:

- flushing of the face for a few hours
- small area of fat loss or change in skin colour around the injection site
- temporary bruising or bleeding around the injection site

What happens next?

You will be reviewed by a virtual (telephone) clinic 3 to 4 months after the injection. An appointment will be sent to you. At this time, you will be able to discuss the effects of the steroid injection and plan any future treatment options.

Further information

Please let staff know of any concerns or questions you may have. We will do our best to answer your queries quickly.