

Use of corticosteroid (cortisone) injections for musculoskeletal (non-inflammatory) conditions in adults

Information for patients


Purpose of this document

- ✓ Inform you of evidence-based best practices so that you and your medical professional can reach a decision together that accounts for the potential benefits and risks based on your age, condition, and activity level.

When to consider a corticosteroid injection

- ✓ The goal is to reduce your pain and make your everyday life easier. However, injections are not a cure.
- ✓ In general, cortisone injections are not recommended as a first-line treatment for pain or injury. It's best to learn about your condition, take protective measures (e.g., avoiding movements that cause pain or temporarily using a cane to walk), and try exercises or other active strategies first, as these are often more effective and have no side effects.
- ✓ If you don't get relief after receiving two cortisone injections in the same spot, another injection in the same location usually won't make a difference.

Expected efficacy of a corticosteroid injection

- ✓ Partially reduces pain, either temporarily (for a period of at least 8 weeks) or sometimes completely, depending on the person, the issue causing the pain, and the part of body receiving the injection
- ✓ Some studies show that for every 10 people who get a cortisone injection for pain:

 - 2 feel better because of the cortisone injection
 - 4 feel better because of the placebo effect
 - 4 do not feel any better
- ✓ It's a good idea to talk to a medical professional about lifestyle changes, exercises, and activities that could be appropriate for you to maximize the effect of the injection
- ✓ Pain is complex and can be influenced by multiple factors (sleep quality, stress, diet, physical activity, smoking, etc.)

Contraindications:

- ✓ Do not get a cortisone injection in a prosthetic joint (knee, hip, shoulder) or a joint with any fixation devices like plates or screws from a fracture
- ✓ Do not get a cortisone injection at the site of an unhealed fracture
- ✓ Do not get a cortisone injection in an infected area or if you have a fever
- ✓ Do not get a cortisone injection if you have had an allergic reaction to a cortisone injection before

Caution is recommended if you:

- ✓ Take anticoagulants
- ✓ Are immunocompromised
- ✓ Will have orthopedic surgery in the next 3 months on the joint where you are getting the injection
- ✓ Are taking Ritonavir for HIV
- ✓ Have glaucoma

Risks - Possible side effects of corticosterone injection

Possible injection site risks

- ✓ Pain at injection site, sometimes for up to 24 hours
- ✓ Skin changes at injection site (thinning of skin and the tissue under the skin, paleness) that can last several months

During injection (risks increase for repeat injections):

- ✓ For injections near tendons, may increase the risk of a torn tendon
- ✓ For injections in joints, may speed up arthrosis in the joint
- ✓ May weaken the bone at the injection site

Rare but serious potential risks

- ✓ Allergic reaction (in the first 15 minutes)
- ✓ Infection (redness, swelling, fever)
- ✓ Vision problems (especially if you have glaucoma)

Possible medical risks

For all cortisone injections at any site:

- ✓ Flushed face (for up to 3 days)
- ✓ High blood pressure (for up to 7 days)
- ✓ If you are diabetic, blood sugar imbalance (for up to 7 days)
- ✓ Headaches
- ✓ Trouble sleeping
- ✓ Temporary disruption of menstrual cycle
- ✓ If you are breastfeeding, possible interruption of milk production (for 1 to 2 days)
- ✓ More than 3 injections in a year can temporarily reduce your body's natural cortisol (a hormone) production.
- ✓ Risk of other drug interactions (give your medical professional a list of your medications)

Recommendations for after a corticosteroid injection

- ✓ Based on the type of cortisone injection and where you get it, the recommended rest period could range from a few days to 2 weeks. Be sure to speak with the professional administering the injection about your post-injection care.
- ✓ If you develop a fever, redness, or worsening pain in the days after your injection, speak with a medical professional right away.

Advice from your medical professional:

- ✓ Do not lift or carry heavy objects with the treated limb for: _____
- ✓ Use the following technical aid: _____ for: _____
- ✓ Additional advice: _____

- The patient consents to a corticosteroid (cortisone) injection and is aware of the risks.
- The medical professional who prescribes or provides the injection confirms that they have informed the patient of the benefits and risks, the post-injection recommendations, and any issues to be monitored.