

CORTISONE INJECTION

Patient Information

What is Cortisone?

Cortisone is the name used to describe a group of drugs correctly known corticosteroids. The type of Cortisone used by Advanced Radiology Clinics is called Celestone (Betamethasone). Cortisone is used to treat pain in various parts of the body where inflammation is felt to be the cause of this pain. The reason why cortisone is effective in treating such pain is because it is a powerful anti-inflammatory.

Why inject Cortisone?

In regard to musculoskeletal problems, cortisone injections are performed in order to reduce or even eliminate pain associated with a variety of disorders, such as:

- Bursitis (most commonly subacromial and trochanteric bursitis)
- Arthritis (any joint may be injected, including joints of the spine)
- Nerve pain (most commonly for sciatica and carpal tunnel)
- Tendinitis / tenosynovitis (such as plantar fasciitis, trigger finger, DeQuervain's).
- Other conditions where inflammation causes pain (frozen shoulder/adhesive capsulitis, Morton's neuroma, ganglion cyst injections and Dupuytren's contracture).

What is involved?

The skin is cleaned/sterilised using an antiseptic agent to reduce the risk of infection. A needle is then guided into the relevant body part using radiological equipment, such as an ultrasound, Computed Tomography (CT) or X-ray. This allows cortisone to be accurately delivered into the area of suspected/proven pain to ensure the best chance of pain relief.

Will it hurt?

The degree of discomfort during the procedure is generally mild as the needle used is very fine and local anaesthetic is mixed in with cortisone. If only one pass is planned (meaning that the needle will only penetrate the skin once) then local anaesthetic is usually NOT injected into the skin. It is our experience that injecting local anaesthetic into the skin in a single pass procedure is actually more painful, as local anaesthetic stings a little prior to taking effect. Also, the needle used to inject the local anaesthetic results in similar discomfort as the needle delivering the cortisone. Of course, if you wish for local anaesthetic to be injected despite our recommendation, we are happy to do this.

Benefits Vs Risks

As for all medical procedures, there are risks and benefits associated with the administration of any medication, including cortisone. The chances of cortisone providing you with the benefit of pain relief in most patient's outweighs the risks. The risks associated with a cortisone injection include:

- Allergy to any of the substances utilised during the procedure, such as the cortisone, dressing, local anaesthetic or antiseptic. This is usually minor and self-limiting.
- The cortisone may result in palpitations, hot flushes, insomnia, and mild mood disturbance. This usually resolves within 24 hours and no treatment is necessary.
- Local minor bruising.

- Transient increase in pain at the injection site before the cortisone takes effect.

Remember that the side effects of cortisone that are commonly reported in the media, such as osteoporosis, weight gain, acne and diabetes only occur when taking cortisone tablets for at least several weeks. These side effects do not occur with the careful use of cortisone injections.

What do I need to know or do once I am home?

Generally once at home, life should continue as normal. You should try to avoid or minimise activities that cause pain to the affected area as much as possible. The steroid is slow releasing and may take a few days before you begin to notice any changes. . If the pain continues without change or returns after a short period of time, then you should consult your doctor and consider a repeat injection as directed.

You may occasionally experience severe pain, however it only usually lasts 24–48 hours and is treated with a cold pack, paracetamol and/or anti-inflammatory medication. However, if the pain is not settling despite the above treatment, then please call your Doctor

Diabetic patients may experience mild increase in blood sugar levels for several days and should talk with their doctor to consideration appropriate counter measures to balance altered sugar levels.

Lastly, once at home there is a (1 in 10,000) risk of developing an infection. An infection is very rare, but is a serious complication, especially if injecting into a joint. Most infections take at least a day or two to manifest, so pain at the injection site after 48 hours is considered to be due to an infection until proven otherwise. Again if you believe that you may have an infection, please consult your doctor immediately.