

Therapeutic Steroid Injection

What is a therapeutic steroid injection and how does it work?

Due to various reasons entailing sports injuries, post-surgical complications, congenital defects, and activities of daily living, areas such as our shoulders, elbows, hips, knees, and feet can become painful to use over time. Typically, the cause of such pain is due to inflammation of different structures within that body part (e.g. joint, tissue, muscle, bursa, etc). A common treatment for this inflammation is the injection of a class of medications called corticosteroids (e.g. Kenalog, Depo-Medrol, and Celestone). The intended purpose of injecting a corticosteroid into an area of concern is to calm the inflammation that may be present and, thus, provide you with pain relief.

What injuries and areas on the body can be treated?

Injuries that can be treated with steroids include:

- Joint injuries
- Tendon injuries
- Tendon sheath injuries
- Muscle injuries
- Nerve injuries

How should I prepare before my treatment?

You should inform us if you are on corticosteroids (Prednisolone, Medrol dose pack or similar drugs), as these particular medications may need to be considered in determining a safe dose of medication we can inject. Consumption of food and beverage is permitted prior to the procedure. An escort/driver is not required, as sedation will not be used. However, for areas to be injected in the foot, a driver is optional, as it may be uncomfortable for you to drive afterwards—particularly long distances. A parent/legal guardian is required to be present and remain throughout the entire appointment for patients who are minors.

What can I expect before and during my treatment?

Upon arrival, you may need to change into a gown to expose the area(s) that will be injected, if we cannot easily access it. You will be taken to an area where your consent for the procedure will be obtained before the process begins. Your vital signs will be assessed along with a pain assessment. You will then be positioned appropriately on an exam table. Thereafter, aseptic precautions will be taken. The area(s) to be injected will be cleansed with betadine or chloraprep, and sterility will be maintained throughout

the remainder of the procedure, in order to minimize the risk of infection. Using a small fine needle, a local anesthetic will be injected in the area(s) to minimize pain throughout the procedure. The ordered therapeutic medication will then be injected into the targeted region to be treated. Usually the corticosteroid is injected with a combination of long acting local anesthetic, but this will be determined by the performing physician. Afterwards, the injection site is thoroughly cleaned and covered with a band-aid/dressing.

Your vital signs will be assessed once more along with your pain level. Most patients experience their pain level to be less or the same immediately following the procedure.

What can I expect after my treatment?

The area(s) of injection may be numb for several hours following your procedure. This will be due to the local anesthetics used. Thereafter, there is a possibility of steroidal inflammation occurring at the site. That is, the area(s) injected may become more painful for 24-48 before subsiding. This occurs in a small percentage of our patients. Generally, patients start feeling an improvement in their symptoms within 3-5 days, but it may take up to a week before beneficial effect is attained. Many patients notice improvement for as long as 3 to 6 months. However, the success of these injections varies depending on factors such as your lifestyle, how physically active you are, the severity of your pain, and the underlying cause of you pain. In such cases when a therapeutic effect is not achieved, a follow-up with your referring physician may be necessary to discuss further recommendations.

Post procedure care:

We recommend that you limit your physical activity for duration of the day in which you receive your injection. After this period of time, you may return to your regular physical activities ***as tolerated***. You may also use ice, elevation and compression for pain relief. Regarding physical therapy, we advise you hold on having a session until one week after your injection.

Because these procedures are performed under sterile conditions, there is a very low risk of infection. However, if you notice any redness, swelling, and/or unusually significant pain at the injection site at any time following your procedure—especially within the first 24-48 hours--please contact your referring clinician as soon as possible.

You will be contacted by a radiology nurse 1-2 week after your procedure as well as 4 weeks after your procedure. The purpose of these calls is to assess your pain level following the injection, as well as address any questions or concerns you may have. Please note that the nurse will not be able make medical recommendations regarding

your care as any concerns you have regarding your plan of care would need to be discussed with your referring clinician.

For questions and/or concerns you may contact either of our nurses, Mon-Fri, 8am-5pm at 713-704-9850.