**Deansgrange Medical Centre**

**Steroid Joint Injection**

**What is a joint injection and why have I been given one?**

Steroid injections are commonly used for the treatment of joint and soft tissue disorders. Steroids have been shown to be helpful for easing pain and reducing high levels of inflammation. They may also protect the cartilage within joints. The steroid reduces the swelling and pain you have, so you can use your joint again. Joint injections are done for people with rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis and many other conditions. Sometimes we inject into the tissues around joints as well because this can help with conditions such as tennis elbow.

**What has been injected into my joints?**

We usually inject a small amount of steroid (Depo-medrone or Adcortyl) mixed with some local anaesthetic (lignocaine) into your joint.

**How long will it be before my joints feel better?**

The local anaesthetic will start to reduce your pain within a few minutes/hours of the injection.

This pain relief will last for 3-6 hours. The steroid will take longer to start working; you may notice some improvement in the following days but it will be up to 2 weeks before you see the full benefit.

So while you are waiting for the steroid to work you can take painkillers such as paracetamol, or cold packs. The joint you have had injected will hopefully feel better for up to 3 months and sometimes longer, but everybody is different so it may not last this long.

Like all medication, an individual’s response to a steroid injection cannot be predicted. Most patients experience an improvement in their symptoms lasting a good few weeks. For some the beneficial effect will persist for several months. Some patients unfortunately gain little or no benefit.

**Can I leave the Practice straight after the injection?**

Generally you will be able to leave after your injection, as long as you have felt well.

Very rarely people can have an allergic reaction to the drugs. If you had an allergic reaction you get a rash on your skin, feel your face swelling up or feel you can’t breathe properly. If this happens we will be able to treat you immediately. If you feel any of these symptoms later on at home you should go to your Emergency Department. Remember this is very unlikely to happen!

**Do I need to rest after the injection?**

It is recommended to rest the joint that has been injected for 48 hours this helps the injection work better. If this is impractical then it is advisable to avoid any strenuous exercise for the following 48 hours. Gentle mobilisation of the joint or structure is well advised to aid dissemination of the steroid around the affected part and soft tissues as well as to prevent stiffness. A general principle is to move the joint injected as normal but do not lift or push heavy objects for a week after the injection.

Then a gradual return to normal activity in the following two weeks is advised.

**What are the risks or side-effects?**

Side effects are rare. Very occasionally people notice a flare in their joint pain within the first 24 hours. This is rare as we use an anaesthetic in the injection. The most important but very rare side effect of treatment is infection in your joint –this is very rare (for every 20,000 injections we give no more than one of them would get an infection). Importantly you should remember that if you have an infected joint it will not get better with the rest and ice packs we suggested. So if your joint feels like it is getting more and more painful and swollen & if you have a high temperature and your injected joint becomes; **Hot, Swollen, Red or Painful** please contact us on (01) 2892116 or out of hours EDOC (01) 2234500

**Are there other side effects I need to know about?**

Some patients experience facial flushing after an injection or itching at the injection site. These symptoms should settle within the first few days. People are often concerned about the possibility of other steroid-related side-effects such as weight gain. One of the advantages of steroid injections compared to tablets is that often the dose can be kept low. This means that these other side-effects are very rare unless injections are given frequently (more than a few times per year). Skin changes –very occasionally you may see some thinning or discoloration of the skin may occur at the site of the injection. This is called de-pigmentation and may take longer to fade; sometimes it has a permanent effect. Menstrual disturbance–women may have some changes in their normal cycle after an injection. This is more likely if you have more than one joint injected. If it lasts longer than one cycle you should inform us. If you have any reactions that you are concerned about you should contact us, EDOC or attend ED.

**I am diabetic -does the injection affect my diabetes?**

The steroid can make your blood sugar higher than normal. You do not need to adjust your tablet medication in this period. We would not inject joints in General Practice for patients on insulin.

**How often can I have my joints injected?**

We do not want to give you too many joint injections. The most we will give you is 4 in a year, into the same joint. Very occasionally we will give you more than this if there are special reasons. However, there is a small risk of frequent injections causing cartilage damage, especially in weight-bearing joints so we may use an alternative medication to inject into the joints (Supla-syn).

**May I take other medicines along with the steroid injection?**

You may take other medications with steroid injections. It is important you tell us if you are taking a drug that thins your blood (an anticoagulant) such as aspirin. We would not inject joints in General Practice for patients on warfarin or NOAC drugs (e.g. Pradaxa, Eliquis).

**Where can I obtain further information?**

If you would like any further information about steroid injections, or if you have any concerns about your treatment, please discuss this with us. You can also go to [www.arthritisresearchuk.org/shop/products/publications/patient-information/drugs/local-steroid- injections.aspx](http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/shop/products/publications/patient-information/drugs/local-steroid-%20injections.aspx) for a leaflet on joint injections.

**Let us know**

If you have any questions regarding the service, we welcome any suggestions about the quality of service you received. This will then help us to improve our service.