**Please note appointments are of short duration therefore the GP will not be able to discuss any other issues.**

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

When your joints are swollen and tender, we often put a needle into your joints to draw out fluid and inject steroid into them. 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.

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

Sometimes it can be nearly 1-2 days after the injection before you start to feel better. 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. If you have had previous injections and they have not lasted this long, then it would be advisable to have your condition re-assessed and a new treatment plan decided with your clinician.

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

Generally, you will be able to leave after your injection, if you feel 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 at home, you should go to your nearest Accident and 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. 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.

**Who can have steroid injections?**

Most people can have steroid injections.

Tell your doctor before having treatment if you:

* have had a steroid injection in the last few weeks – you usually need to wait at least six weeks between injections
* you've had three steroid injections in the last year – doctors usually recommend no more than three injections in the same area in the space of 12 months
* have had an allergic reaction to steroids in the past
* have an infection (including eye infections)
* have recently had, or are about to have, any vaccinations
* are pregnant, breastfeeding or trying for a baby
* have any other conditions, such as diabetes, [epilepsy](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/epilepsy/), high blood pressure, or problems with your liver, heart or kidneys
* are taking other medicines, such as [anticoagulants](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/anticoagulants/)

Steroid injections may not always be suitable in these cases, although your doctor may recommend them if they think the benefits outweigh any risks.

**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 usually settles within a couple of days. 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 please contact us or 111 OOH, If you have a high temperature and your joint becomes; ♣ Hot ♣ Red ♣ Swollen ♣ Painful.

**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 weightbearing joints. Your clinician will be able to advise you more specifically about this risk.

**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 Warfarin, you should arrange a repeat INR 3 days after the injection.