

Steroid injection

How to use this medication

What is a steroid?



Steroids are natural hormones produced by your adrenal glands. Steroids can be injected into joints to help to relieve the pain and swelling from arthritis. Examples include methylprednisolone (depomedrol), triamcinolone (kenalog or aristospan), and betamethasone (celestone).

Given by injection



Steroids can be injected directly into a joint or around a tendon. After the injection the medicine works to relieve the pain and swelling from arthritis.

How long does it take to work?



The injection will usually take about 24 to 48 hours to work. If local freezing was given with the injection you might feel better a little bit quicker.

How long does it last?



The length of improvement varies. Some patients can feel better for months while others find only a few days of relief.

How many injections can I have?



If the first injection works well then you may benefit from another. As a general rule the number of injections is limited to 3 or 4 for a single joint per year.

What you need to do

Call if red, hot, swollen, & painful joint



If the injected area becomes very painful, red, or swollen call your doctor immediately. If your doctor is not available, seek medical attention right away. One of the very rare (1 in 15,000) risks of a steroid injection is infection.

Be careful with infection



Steroids can make it harder for you to fight infections. Call your doctor if you have a fever or think you have an infection.

Rest the joint for 24 hours



If possible, it is best to rest the joint for 24 hours after the injection. This might make the injection work better and last longer.

Side effects & important facts

Injury to the joint or tendon



A steroid injection can rarely cause injury to a joint or a tendon. Your doctor will discuss this risk.

Flushing



After an injection some patients feel "flushed". This usually isn't serious but let your doctor know if this happens.

Blood sugars



A steroid injection can sometimes cause a rise in blood sugars in patients who have diabetes. If you have diabetes make sure to test your blood sugars for a few days after the injection.

Skin changes



A steroid injection can rarely cause an area of the skin to lose pigment (turn white). This is more common in darker skinned people. Steroid injections can also cause loss of the fat layer just below the skin causing the skin to turn a purple color.

Sleep trouble & increased energy



A steroid injection can sometimes make you feel full of energy. This can sometimes make it difficult to sleep.

When should I call my doctor

Please call if you need to stop

- If you feel sick and want to stop
- If you are concerned about any side effects



Other reasons to call your doctor:



Severe pain in the area injected



Fever or think you have an infection



Skin changes or loss of pigment