

## STEROID INJECTIONS

Steroids are medicines that can be used to reduce swelling and inflammation. They are commonly used to treat or assess conditions such as trigger finger, carpal tunnel syndrome and arthritis. A number of different steroids are available for injection. Some work quite quickly but for a relatively short time. I use an agent called Triamcinolone (Adcortyl), which may take around a week to become effective but which can ease your symptoms for two months or longer.

The injections can be repeated every three months if you need them but it is recommended that they not be performed more than four times per year. It is my experience that for some conditions there is the "law of diminishing returns" with injections becoming less effective. Repeated injections at one site can cause local complications due to thinning and weakening of tissues.

The injection is performed at the time of a consultation in an out-patient setting whilst you are seated. The skin is cleaned with antiseptic. A needle is positioned into the affected area and the solution is injected through the needle. The needle prick and injection can be rather sore but the process usually takes less than a minute. I would recommend that you stay on the premises for 15 minutes after injection in case of a reaction. I also would recommend that you do not use the hand heavily for 48hr after the injection.

An injection is not performed if you (a) have an infection at any site, (b) are allergic to steroid, (c) feel unwell, (d) are due to have surgery in that area soon, (e) are pregnant or breast feeding, (f) have poorly controlled diabetes, (g) are on warfarin (INR>3), (h) do not want the injection.

There are a number of potential but mainly rare side-effects and complications: -

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| Early        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Fainting in those that are needle-phobic.</li><li>● Allergic reaction to the drug.</li><li>● Flushing of the face for a few hours.</li><li>● Bleeding and bruising from the injection site.</li></ul>  |
| Intermediate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Pain increase 24-48 hours after the injection ("steroid flare").</li><li>● Diabetic patients may notice a temporary increase in blood sugar levels.</li><li>● Infection.</li><li>● Mood change for some days.</li><li>● Slight menstrual disturbances.</li></ul> |
| Late         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Thinning and colour change in the skin around the injection site (illustrated).</li><li>● Damage of tendon, ligament or nerve particularly if injections are repeated.</li></ul>   |



Most people have no problems after steroid injections. However, seek advice if you have concerns; particularly if you feel unwell, have a high temperature or persistent swelling, redness or pain around the site of injection that does not settle within the first couple of days.