

CORTISONE INJECTIONS

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Cortisone is a steroid used to decrease pain and inflammation in a specific area of the body. Cortisone injections are commonly given in joints such as the knee, hip, shoulder, and wrist. These injections usually include a corticosteroid medication and a local anesthetic.

Q: How many injections can you have in a year?

A: Most physicians limit the number of cortisone injections to 3-4 for the same joint in a year.

The Injection Procedure:

- The injection is given in a physician's office.
- To help decrease the risk of infection, your provider will start by cleaning your skin.
- A numbing agent may be used at the injection site.
- Cortisone will be injected through the numb area using a small needle to minimize discomfort.
- A small bandage will be applied over the injection site that can be removed when you get home.

After Your Injection:

- You may resume normal activities as tolerated but it is recommended to rest the treated area for 3-5 days to allow for the greatest possible improvement.
- Avoid activities that may cause injury to the treated area.
- Symptoms of pain and inflammation should improve after 24-48 hours but it may take up to 10 days to see the full effect.
- Apply ice to the injection site as needed to relieve pain.
- Watch for signs of infection including increasing pain, redness, and swelling at the injection site that lasts more than 48-72 hours.
- Follow-up with your provider as discussed at your appointment.

Side Effects May Include:

- Temporary increased pain after the injection is called a "cortisone flare" and usually lasts 24-48 hours. Taking over-the-counter NSAIDs (ibuprofen or Aleve®) or acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and applying ice to the injection area can help.
- Temporary elevation of glucose/blood sugar levels (can last 3-5 days). Diabetic patients on insulin should follow insulin sliding scales and dietary control to decrease elevation. Patients with type 2 diabetes should continue prescribed oral medications and dietary control.
- A warm, flushing reaction or generalized redness of skin. This should resolve within 48 hours.

Rare Complications:

- Infection of the skin or joint.
- Bruising or bleeding at the injection site.
- Injury or weakening to the joint or tendon at the injection site.
- Loss of the fat layer below the skin at the injection site.
- Nerve damage.
- De-pigmentation of skin at the injection site.