AFTERCARE FOLLOWING STEROID INJECTION

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

THE SOCIETY OF MUSCULOSKELETAL MEDICINE
putting theory into practice

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The Primary Care Rheumatology and Musculoskeletal Medicine Society

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Your steroid injection

You have had a steroid injection to help with your joint or soft tissue problem. Before the procedure, your health professional talked to you about how it helps and what may happen afterwards. This leaflet tells you what you need to know after the procedure.

How does a steroid injection help?

It helps reduce swelling and pain. It helps you move, exercise and sleep better.

How long does it take to work?

It may take a few days to start working. It may help for a few weeks or longer.

What should I know after my injection?

1. **Pain**
   - Some people may feel more pain for a short time. This is called 'post injection flare'.
   - It can happen to about 1 in 10 people[1].
   - It should get better on its own within 3 days.
   - You may use an ice pack for 10 -15 minutes, a few times a day. Wrap it in a moist towel first - never put ice directly onto your skin**.**
   - You can take Paracetamol or any pain medicine you normally use, if you have no allergies.

2. **Infection**
   Infections are very rare. They happen to about 1 in 3,000 to 50,000 people[2].
   Signs of infection:
   - Pain lasts more than 3 days or gets worse[3,4,5].
   - Swelling, redness, or warmth at the area.
   - Feeling unwell or having a fever above 38°C.
   - You should see a doctor **IMMEDIATELY,** if you think you have an infection.

3. **Take it easy**
   - Rest the area where you had the injection for the first 24 hours[2,3,6]. This may help the medicine work better. It may also lower the chance of 'post injection flare'[3].
   - For 2 to 3 weeks, it is important not to overdo it [7,8]. Start gently and build up a little each time.
   - Your health professional can advise how much rest and exercise is best.

4. **If you have diabetes**
   - Your blood sugar may go up for a few days.
   - About 1 in 100 people with diabetes may notice changes[1]. Some may last up to 7 days[9].
   - Check your blood sugar at home more often for the next 3 days[2].
   - Look for signs like- feeling very thirsty, needing to go to the toilet often.
   - Talk to your doctor if you have any concerns.

5. **Changes in eyesight**
   Look for signs like- blurry eyesight or bright light hurts your eyes. Tell your doctor or optician right away[1].

6. Allergic reaction

A very rare allergic reaction called 'anaphylactic shock' can happen. But this is very/ extremely unlikely[10,11]. It is advised that you sit in the waiting room for 20 minutes after your injection.

- If it does happen, it often starts within 20 minutes**.**
- If you feel unwell during that time, tell the health professional quickly.
- If you get a rash, feel dizzy, or find it hard to breathe after your clinic visit, call 999.

7. Other possible problems[1,12-14]

- May harm the joint and soft tissues, especially with repeated injections.
- Skin colour may change around the injection, it often goes back to normal.
- Some people may feel different moods for a short time.
- Women may notice small changes in their periods.
- Some people may have a red face for a little while.
- People take blood-thinning drugs may bruise easily. See a doctor if bleed more than usual.
- Some people may be given a steroid card if they have had a lot of steroid medicine or injections.

If you have any further questions, please ask the health professional treating you.

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Authors: Dr Sharon Chan-Braddock (SOMM, MACP), Matt Daly (SOMM), Dr Nick Livadas (Teesside University)

Expert Panel:

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