



Patient information leaflet for steroid injections during the outbreak of novel coronavirus (COVID-19)

What are the benefits of steroid injections?

Steroid injections are commonly used to treat joint or soft tissue problems by reducing pain or inflammation. This can help patients regain movement, mobility and improve quality of life. In some patients, steroid injections can prevent significant joint damage. How much the steroid improves symptoms can vary between patients and for different problems. Steroid injections may be administered in clinic by your doctor or you may be referred to the imaging department for an injection using ultrasound guidance by a radiology doctor.

What are the risks of steroid injection?

Steroid injections are associated with some known risks, which your doctor would have discussed with you, including pain, infection, bleeding/bruising, skin discolouration, and high blood sugar in diabetics.

At the present time there is a potential further risk in relation to coronavirus. There is concern that steroids can increase the risk of a person getting coronavirus as well as make the illness more severe. These concerns are based on knowledge that steroids can reduce the ability of the body to fight infection for a short period.

Unfortunately there is no current evidence available on the use of steroid injections during a coronavirus pandemic. We do not know whether there are any increased risks associated with injecting steroids. As a precaution, doctors are being advised to only use steroid injections when absolutely necessary, and when other safer options have been tried. Some people are at higher risk than others, such as those with other medical conditions (such as heart disease) or those aged over 70 years old. These risk factors will be taken into account and discussed with you by your doctor when considering the risk/benefit of steroid injections.

Why have I been referred for a steroid injection?

Your doctor has referred you for a steroid injection following your clinical consultation. This is because your doctor and you have together decided that a steroid injection for your

symptoms has benefits that outweigh the potential risks and other possible treatment options have not been successful.

When should I avoid a steroid injection?

You should not be given a steroid injection if you have an infection, or if there is a possibility you may have coronavirus. If you have symptoms that may be associated with active coronavirus infection (cough, fever, loss of taste or smell) you should not have an injection and should cancel your appointment.

What happens next?

You will be sent an appointment to either attend clinic or the imaging department for your injection. We advise you should maintain social distancing and minimal contact with other people 2 weeks prior to your injection. This is because it can take 2 weeks for the virus to show symptoms in patients.

When you attend for your appointment, precautions will be taken to protect you and staff. You will be asked to clean your hands and wear a facemask.

The doctor will confirm you still wish to proceed with the injection before it is given.

What happens after the injection?

Following the injection your referring doctor may have advised a period of isolation to further reduce the risk of you getting coronavirus infection.

If you feel unwell following your injection contact your GP or local emergency department.

Your referring doctor will arrange a consultation following a period after your injection to assess your response.

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(UCLH on behalf of imaging, T&O and Rheumatology.)