

Information Sheet for Joint Injection

Indication

For symptom relief purposes, medications are often injected into the inflamed or swollen joints. It is a form of local injection, whose effect is limited to the affected tissues. Apart from steroids, your doctor may choose to inject a local anaesthetic or hyaluronic acid based on your condition. Steroid injection can relieve inflammation, pain and swelling, while local anaesthetics can provide pain relief. Hyaluronic acid is prescribed to relieve symptoms due to joint degeneration.

Common Injection Sites

Joint injections are often carried out in the knees, shoulders, elbows, wrists, ankle and fingers. Your doctor will also perform an ultrasound-guided procedure to confirm the injection site.

Effectiveness of Joint Injection

It varies from patient to patient. Local anaesthetics may last for a few hours, while the affected area will improve in one to two days with steroids, whose effect can last from weeks to months. As a lubricant, hyaluronic acid can provide relief for three to six months.

After Joint Injection

Your doctor will assess your condition after injection, and you will be discharged if stable. You are also advised to rest for one to two days after the procedure, follow your doctor's guidance on home exercise and take oral medications when necessary, e.g. analgesics or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).

Risks and Side Effects

1. It is normal to feel pain at the injection site within the first 48 hours after injection. Oral anti-inflammatory medications or ice therapy is often prescribed as temporary relief.
2. Allergic reactions like skin rash may occur shortly after injection. Severe reactions to medications may cause breathing difficulty, unstable blood pressure, or death in rare circumstances.
3. In a minority of cases, the use of steroids can cause the skin surrounding the injection site to become thinner or discoloured.
4. Infection at injection site is very rare.
5. Possible bleeding or numbness in case of damage to surrounding tissues, blood vessels or adjacent nerves.
6. Tear of tendon or tendon sheath (less than 1%).
7. Serious side effects are uncommon. Please consult your doctor if in doubt.

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