

Orthopedics and Sports Medicine Institute

About Cortisone Injections

Why have a cortisone injection?

A cortisone injection is a pain-relief treatment. Injecting cortisone gets it directly to the inflamed region quickly. Your doctor may suggest an injection if resting, wearing splints or taking oral medication doesn't relieve your pain.

Injecting cortisone can relieve pain for anything from a sports injury to arthritis, and it is used to treat inflammation, a sprain or other problems.

The injection is simple and doesn't take long. Your doctor will ask questions about your health because certain medical conditions, such as diabetes, can be affected by cortisone. Injecting cortisone is less complex than having surgery and often provides lasting pain relief that can help you return to normal activities.

What is cortisone?

Cortisone is a type of steroid which can greatly reduce inflammation (swelling, redness and irritation). Because cortisone is a synthetic steroid and not like those used by some athletes, it won't make you gain weight or get bigger muscles.

Since the cortisone is injected into an inflamed area and not taken as a pill, little of it goes beyond the injection area. This means you're not likely to have the side effects sometimes experienced by those who use oral medication.

Getting the injection

Your skin will be cleaned and numbed at the injection site. You'll be injected with local anesthetics – for short term pain relief – and then with cortisone.

It may take a moment for the doctor to get the needle to the precise region. A small bandage will be applied and you can return home.

It is normal if you feel more pain after the injection – this will go away soon. For the first day or two, rest, but you don't need to stay in bed. Stay active, but avoid tasks that may strain the injured area.

Risks and complications

Cortisone injections have the following risks and possible complications:

- Briefly increased pain
- Changes in blood sugar levels
- Ruptured tendon (very rare)