

CORTISONE INJECTION

What is cortisone?

Cortisone is in a family of medicines called corticosteroids, which are strong anti-inflammatory drugs. Corticosteroids are used for many conditions. They can be taken by mouth or in a variety of other ways including creams, inhalers, or injections (shots).

Because they have a similar name, corticosteroids are sometimes confused with anabolic steroids. They are not the same. Anabolic steroids are a group of drugs that increase muscle mass and strength. These are often used illegally by athletes and can have many harmful side effects.

What is a cortisone injection used for?

A cortisone shot is often used to give short-term pain relief and reduce the swelling from inflammation of a joint, tendon, or bursa (sac that provides cushion in a joint). These problems are common in knee, elbow, and shoulder joints. Reducing the swelling helps relieve pain and discomfort and can speed up recovery from an injury.

A shot of cortisone may also be given to reduce inflammation over the whole body (for example, if you have an allergic reaction or a flare-up of rheumatoid arthritis).

How is the shot given?

The corticosteroid medicine is usually mixed with a local anesthetic and then injected into the painful area. At first, the shot may feel uncomfortable, but the local anesthetic will help with the discomfort.

What happens after I get the shot?

When the anesthetic wears off, the area where the shot was given may be quite sore. Your healthcare provider may recommend putting an ice bag on the area for 20 to 30 minutes every 3 to 4 hours after the shot and taking an anti-inflammatory medicine (such

as ibuprofen). The cortisone will start to reduce the inflammation and give you pain relief within 2 to 3 days. In some cases, the cortisone will permanently relieve your symptoms. In other cases, the pain relief is temporary and can last anywhere from a couple of weeks to years.

How well the shot works depends on many things, including the amount of drug given, the cause of the problem, if the shot is given in the right area, and other factors.

Many chronic (ongoing) inflammatory conditions are caused by overuse. If you continue activities that overuse the injured area, the inflammation may return and the cortisone shot will probably not help that much.

What are the risks?

Side effects from cortisone shots are rare. Possible side effects at the site where the shot was given include:

- slight bruising of the skin
- shrinkage of the fatty tissue under the skin where the shot was given
- loss of skin pigment where the shot was given
- increase in pain after the shot
- infection
- weakening of the tendons or tendon rupture
- allergic reaction to the medicine

Diabetics may have a temporary increase in their blood sugar after a shot.

Cortisone can temporarily weaken the immune system. While receiving these shots, you should not get certain vaccines. Also, avoid contact with anyone who has chickenpox or measles, especially if you have never had these diseases. Your immune system may not be strong enough to fight off the infection while you are taking cortisone.