Royal Cornwall Hospitals
NHS Trust

Foot and ankle steroid injections

One + all | we care

Why do I need this?

Steroid injections can be beneficial to determine the source of pain or to improve pain in patients with suspected or proven foot and ankle problems. The injection can be performed for diagnostic and / or treatment purposes. The relief of symptoms may range from a few hours to months. In some cases however, the injection gives no pain relief at all.

As well as providing diagnostic information this procedure may provide relief of symptoms in the following conditions:

- osteo-arthritis
- inflammatory arthritis
- soft tissue problems such as Morton's Neuroma, plantar heel pain or tendinopathy.

What does it involve?

These injections are performed as a day case procedure by a qualified clinician, usually under local anaesthesia in a treatment room or operating theatre using a sterile technique. The procedure takes around 10 minutes, but please allow for 2-2½ hours at the hospital to allow for delays and a period of monitoring after the procedure. You may be asked to change into a hospital gown.

A needle is inserted into the joint under fluoroscopic (X-ray) guidance to allow injection of the therapeutic substances (a combination of steroid, local anaesthetic and in some cases radio-opaque dye).

If the procedure is being used to check for infection, a fluid sample will be removed from the joint and sent to the laboratory for analysis.

The local anaesthetic may provide relief of pain immediately but this may last only for a few hours. The amount of pain relief provided by the local anaesthetic in the first few hours will provide important diagnostic information and should be monitored closely. The invasive nature of the procedure and the steroid itself may worsen your pain in the short term. Later, it will help to reduce the inflammation in the area.

In the unlikely event that we are unable to get the needle into the target area, you may need to be rebooked for a further attempt to repeat the injection.

What happens afterwards?

- Avoid driving on the day of injection if possible.
- You are encouraged to fully weight-bear straight after the injection. The first few steps can be somewhat uncomfortable as patients occasionally report a sensation of the joint feeling 'full' – this usually eases after a few steps.
- Avoid strenuous activity for 48 hours. You may return to routine activities as soon as possible.
- You will be asked to maintain a pain diary to assess the relief of symptoms following the procedure.

Will I need any follow-up?

Following the procedure, follow-up will be arranged to discuss the outcome of the injection – this is usually by telephone or video consultation. Please remember to complete and keep your pain diary.

What are the possible risks or complications?

For this procedure the risk is minimal, but very rarely complications occur. These include:

- allergic reaction to the substances injected (radio-opaque dye, steroid or local anaesthetic)
- infection
- post-injection flare up of symptoms
- injury to nerves (this could lead to numbness, pins and needles and weakness)
- injury to blood vessels (this could lead to bruising and bleeding)
- tendon rupture (if near a tendon)
- altered control of blood sugar (diabetics may find it harder to control their levels for a few days to weeks and should monitor them closely)
- skin depigmentation
- fat atrophy leading to skin dimpling
- facial flushing
- pain during the procedure

Continued overleaf

- mood swings
- menstrual irregularity for a few months.

To minimise these risks please inform us if you:

- have diabetes
- have had previous 'reactions' to injected substances (such as local anaesthetic at the dentist or previous joint injections)
- are immuno-compromised
- take blood thinning medication.

These factors will not always mean injections are not possible, but it is important for the clinical team to be aware.

As X-rays are used during this procedure, female patients who are premenopausal will need to be sure that they are not pregnant. If you are unsure, you should have a pregnancy test in hospital prior to the procedure.

If you have an infection in any part of your body or have had antibiotics prescribed on or around the date of your injection, it will not be performed. Please contact the Injection Booking Clerk on 01872 253442 if this is the case.

Any questions?

If you have any queries please contact the Foot and Ankle Secretaries:

Alison Luckman (Mr Giurea's secretary)	01872 253430
Ashleigh Betts (Mr Butler's and Mr Walter's secretary)	01736 758802
Di Banfield (Injection Booking Clerk)	01872 253442

rcht.cornwallfootandankle@nhs.net

If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690

RCHT 1915

Revised 11/2022 V2 Review due 11/2025