

Cortisone Injections to Reduce Pain

1) What is cortisone and how does it work?

"Cortisone" is the name of a group of medicines that are very strong anti-inflammatories. Cortisone can help to reduce the pain of a tendon, joint or nerve that is inflamed.

2) How is cortisone given?

Cortisone can be taken as a pill, but an injection is usually safer and more effective because it puts the medication directly where it is needed.

3) What conditions are treated with cortisone?

Almost any painful tendon, joint or nerve condition can be treated with cortisone. Most conditions respond well.

4) Is cortisone a cure, a temporary fix, or is it just "masking the problem"?

Cortisone can be a cure... for any pain that is due to an inflamed tendon, joint or nerve after a minor injury.

Cortisone can be a temporary fix... for any pain that is due to a minor injury, but the patient doesn't want to take the required time to heal properly. For example, a golfer who gets "Golfer's Elbow" at the beginning of golf season.

Cortisone is just masking the problem... of any pain due to long-term physical stresses that are not being changed. For example, a secretary who gets carpal tunnel syndrome but can't retire for many more years.

No injection therapy can be expected to 100% cure a chronic wear-and-tear condition such as osteoarthritis, chronic tendonitis or chronic nerve pain. An injection can, however, give an extended period of symptom relief.

5) How frequently can cortisone be given?

There are NO LIFETIME LIMITS on cortisone. Most doctors agree that is usually safe to give injections **every 3 months**. However, if you do need more than one or two injections, you may want to start considering other options.

6) Are there any complications?

Short term: Sometimes patients will describe a "hot flushing" sensation. If you have diabetes, cortisone can cause a brief rise of your blood sugar. A very small percentage will get a lot more pain for 48hrs before the pain actually reduces.

Long term: Repeated cortisone injections can cause tendon damage or worsening arthritis, but it depends on the situation. Multiple knee injections are probably safe, but tendons should not be injected repeatedly.

No medical treatment is 100% safe. A tendon or joint pain may sometimes worsen in the weeks after an injection. This is uncommon and hard to predict. If you have concerns, please discuss it with the doctor before the injection.

7) What can I expect from the injection?

Immediate: All needles and injections cause some pain. The amount of pain depends on sensitivity of the body part and sometimes on your fear of injections.

Intermediate: The cortisone is mixed with a numbing medicine, so you will usually experience a kind of numbness for many hours. When that wears off, many people will get a dull ache or throbbing sensation. A very small percentage will get a harmless, but very painful "cortisone flare", increasing their pain for 48hrs.

Long Term: It may take anywhere from a few days to a few weeks to feel the full benefits of your injection. Book a follow up with the doctor if it does not help.

8) Final Thoughts

When used appropriately cortisone is safe and effective. Even as we head towards the middle of the 21st century, **cortisone it is still one of our most trusted treatments for tendon, joint and nerve pains.**

Please be sure to ask the doctor all your questions before your injection.