

Coastal Pain & Spine Center

Major Joint (Shoulder, Hip, Knee) Intra-articular Steroid Injection

What is Osteoarthritis (OA)?

Osteoarthritis is the most common form of arthritis sometimes referred to as degenerative joint disease or “wear-and-tear.” It can occur in any joint of the body though commonly in the shoulders, knees, and hips as a result of the gradual breakdown of cartilage and slow change of bone over time. Generally develops slowly and can worsen with time. Often causes pain isolated to the affected joint with stiffness and swelling on occasion. An xray can help assist in the diagnosis of arthritis.

What is an Intra-articular Steroid Injection?

Pain in joints can originate from arthritis and inflammation as noted above. An intra-articular injection uses low dose x-ray to guide a small needle into the joint space. Following needle placement, a small dose of contrast confirms the proper location and spread. Next, a combination of local anesthetic and steroids are administered into the joint space. The local anesthetic as numbing medication for immediate relief and the steroid being a potent anti-inflammatory medication to provide long lasting relief.

How long is the pain relief and what if it returns?

It is difficult to predict the response for someone's first joint injection though most commonly patient's will have 3-6 months of relief following the injection. There are some that have a shorter or no response and others that have a more prolonged response. If pain returns, we can repeat the procedure pending the duration of relief that was achieved. If there is no improvement, it is possible we can target the nerves that provide sensation to the joint.

What are the risks?

As with any procedure it is not without risks. With placement of a needle through the skin, there is always concern for infection or bleeding. **Notify your doctor if you are taking any blood thinners/aspirin/plavix or have an active infection.** Patients with diabetes should monitor their blood sugar closely as steroids can cause it to increase. Generally, the biggest risk is some mild post procedure soreness which typically resolves in 24 hours. Stretching, ice/heat, and anti-inflammatory medications (if medically able) can help with this. Risk that the procedure makes things worse or does not offer improvement is possible.