

Joint Injections: After Your Visit

Your Care Instructions

Joint injections are shots into a joint, such as the knee. They may be used to put in medicines, such as pain relievers. Or they can be used to take out fluid. Sometimes the fluid is tested in a lab. This can help find the cause of a joint problem.

A corticosteroid, or steroid, shot is used to reduce inflammation in tendons or joints. It is often used to treat problems such as arthritis, tendinitis, and bursitis.

Steroids can be injected directly into a painful, inflamed joint. They can also help reduce inflammation of a bursa. A bursa is a sac of fluid. It cushions and lubricates areas where tendons, ligaments, skin, muscles, or bones rub against each other.

A steroid shot can sometimes help with short-term pain relief when other treatments haven't worked. If steroid shots help, pain may improve for weeks or months.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Put ice or a cold pack on the area for 10 to 20 minutes at a time. Put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin.
- Take anti-inflammatory medicines to reduce pain, swelling, or inflammation. These include ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) and naproxen (Aleve). Read and follow all instructions on the label.
- Avoid strenuous activities for several days, especially those that put stress on the area where you got the shot.
- If you have dressings over the area, keep them clean and dry. You may remove them when your doctor tells you to.

When should you call for help?

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have signs of infection, such as:
 - Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness.
 - Red streaks leading from the site.
 - Pus draining from the site.
 - A fever.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if you have any problems.