

## Steroid Injection

### **What is a steroid?**

A steroid is a medication that when injected provides pain relief by decreasing inflammation and swelling. It begins to act slowly within 24-72 hours with beneficial effects lasting days to months. A steroid injection is a **not** a pain killer.

### **What conditions are steroid injections used for?**

Steroid injections can be used to treat the inflammation of small areas of the body such as inflammation of a bursa (bursitis), tendon (tendonitis), joint (arthritis), or a joint's lining (synovitis).

### **When is a steroid injection given?**

- When pain due to inflammation is severe either in a joint or the surrounding structures.
- When only a few joints are involved.
- When specific joints are preventing activity.
- When other anti-inflammatory medication cannot be used or has been ineffective.
- If more than 90 days have passed since the last injection.

### **Benefits of steroid injections:**

- Administered easily in the office.
- Rapid onset of action; although may take 3-4 weeks to reach full beneficial effect.
- Less GI upset than oral anti-inflammatory medication.
- Reduced pain and swelling.
- Increased mobility.
- May be combined with other treatment such as physical therapy.

### **Possible side effects following injection:**

- Infection.
- Thinning (atrophy) or altered color of the skin at the site of the injection.
- Flushing.
- Swelling of fingers or face (edema).
- Menstrual changes.
- Mood changes.
- Raised blood pressure.
- Raised or unstable blood glucose levels in diabetics for several days following injection.
- After repeated injections, thinning of the joint cartilage, weakening of the ligaments of the joint, increased inflammation in the joint (arthritis) due to a reaction to a corticosteroid that has crystallized.

**Steroid injection – what to expect:**

- Area to be injected will be identified.
- The area will be cleansed to prevent infection.
  - *Please alert office staff if you are allergic to iodine or chlorhexidine.*
- The provider will inject the steroid into the affected area.
- The needle is withdrawn, and a band-aid is applied to the injection site.

**After receiving steroid injection:**

- Rest the joint for about 24 hours.
- Avoid excessive movement or stress on the joint for about one week. Sometimes there is increased pain after the injection which settles within 24 hours.
- If there is pain, you should rest and apply ice for 20 mins, remove for 20 mins, repeat 20 on/20 off cycle as necessary.
- If the pain worsens over 48 hours and/or you feel unwell, contact our office at 608-501-6205.