

Steroid Injections for Shoulder, Arm, or Hand Problems



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER

Pain from joint or tendon problems is often caused by inflammation. Steroids help to decrease inflammation and often ease the pain. The steroid used for the injection is a form of cortisone. The injections may be used to treat problems of the hand, arm, or shoulder such as:

- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- De Quervain's tendonitis
- Rotator cuff tendonitis
- Tennis elbow
- Trigger fingers, also known as stenosing tenosynovitis
- Arthritis

How is the injection done?

1. The skin at the site of the injection will be cleaned with alcohol or other skin disinfectant.
2. The medicine, a mixture of the cortisone and a local anesthetic, will be in a syringe with a needle. The anesthetic will help ease pain during the injection.
3. The needle will be inserted into the area to be treated and the medicine will be injected.
4. A bandaid or gauze dressing will be placed over the injection site.

What to expect

You should feel the pain ease over the next few days, and you may have relief for weeks. Each person responds to the injections differently. In some cases, one injection is all that is needed. For other

people, several injections may be needed for relief. There are also a very small number of people who have no relief from the steroid injection.

If the injection works well for you, the treatment may be repeated. Often the number of injections is limited because repeated use of cortisone could damage the tendons or cartilage.

Side effects

Some people have side effects from this treatment, such as:

- Increased pain at the site for a day or two after the injection, known as a cortisone flare. Use ice packs for 24 to 48 hours after the injection to help. The pain most often will ease over a few days.
- Changes in the color of the skin at the injection site. The skin may look lighter in color and be thinner. This effect may not go away.
- Allergic reaction to the medicine used for the injection.
- If you have diabetes, steroid injections may cause your blood sugar to increase for several days after the injection.

Call your doctor right away

If you have any signs of an infection at the injection site, such as:

- Skin is red or warm to the touch
- You have chills or fever with a temperature over 100.5 degrees F or 38 degrees C