

# A Patient's Guide To Targeted Injections of the Foot and Ankle



## What is a targeted injection?

We will use low dose X-ray (fluoroscopy) or ultrasound to guide a needle to the injection site. Further confirmation may be obtained by injecting a small amount of dye (a colourless liquid that shows up on X-rays) if a joint is being injected.

We inject local anaesthetic into the skin to temporarily numb the area to reduce any discomfort during the procedure.

The medicine which gives the pain relief is usually a corticosteroid, commonly known as a 'steroid' or 'cortisone'. Corticosteroids are anti-inflammatory medications used to treat a range of conditions. This medicine will help to reduce the swelling and inflammation in the injected area. Local anaesthetic mixed with the steroid gives immediate pain relief, while the slower-acting steroid may take 48 hours to 2 weeks to have an effect.

You will often be asked to keep a pain diary to record the pain before and after the procedure. The pain diary helps your doctor to assess the effectiveness of the injection.

## What is the purpose of the injection?

Foot and ankle injections are carried out for **diagnostic** or **therapeutic** purposes.

### Diagnostic purpose:

Injections are particularly useful when the source of your pain is not clear and can assist the surgeon in confirming which structure in your foot or ankle is causing the pain.

### Therapeutic purpose:

The aim is to improve your symptoms. The successful foot or ankle injection will ease your pain for a period of time which varies greatly between individuals and injections, from days to many months.

## Before your injection

Please let your doctor know if:

- You are on a blood thinning medication
- You are on medication which suppresses your immune system, for example methotrexate, azathioprine or steroids.
- You have an infection or any other medical condition which may mean we need to reschedule the injection procedure
- You have an allergy to iodine-based products or one of the medications used in the injection
- You are pregnant

## Are there any risks associated with injections?

### **Increased pain in the injected area, known as 'Steroid Flare':**

This is an aggravation of the inflammation that the injection was meant to treat. It can last 24hrs up to few days. If you experience severe pain beyond 48 hours, please seek medical attention.

### **Bleeding:**

The injected area may bruise or bleed after the treatment. If you are on blood thinning medication such as aspirin or warfarin, the risk of bleeding is higher.

### **Local skin and fat changes:**

There may be skin discolouration (usually a lightening effect) or thinning of fat at the injected site. This can leave a small pale area around where the injection was given.

### **Risk of the tendon or fascial rupture:**

An injection around the tendons or fascia has a risk of weakening it and possible rupture.

### **Allergic reaction to the injection:**

This is rare. Usually this reaction happens immediately after the injection and can be treated while you are still in the hospital.

### **Infection:**

This complication is very rare. The injected area may become infected and may need antibiotics or possible surgical drainage. The signs of infection include increased pain, swelling, redness, weeping and pus coming from the injected area.

### **Recurrence:**

The pain relief is temporary and the duration is variable from a few days to number of months and occasionally years.

## After your injection

You will usually be discharged on the same day.

We suggest that you avoid driving yourself for at least 4 hours after the examination, but clarify this with your treating doctor. You may return to normal activity on the same day as comfort allows

Diabetic patients should monitor their blood sugar more closely over the next few days, as the steroid can alter your blood sugar control.

Drink plenty of fluids afterwards if fluoroscopic contrast media has been injected. If you have any problems after the procedure, please contact your GP or the specialist.