

Home Care After a Steroid Injection

The handout describes what to expect after a steroid injection. You may feel sore at the injection site for the next 2-4 days. For the first 24 hours, you may apply ice (wrapped in a cloth) to the site (20 minutes on and then 20 minutes off) to decrease pain. After 24 hours, you may use heat, if needed.

Your pain may go away right away, or it may take a number of days. This is because two medicines were used. The first, a local anesthetic, will only work for a few hours. The second, a steroid, may not start working for 2-5 days. Some people feel no changes in their pain for up to 2 weeks.

You may have some weakness for the next 3-5 hours due to the anesthetic used. There may be a time after the local anesthetic wears off that you feel like you have more pain. This is called a pain flare. If this happens, limit your activities for the first 24 hours. Keep taking the pain medicine prescribed by your doctor.

You will be given a pain log to complete for the next 14 days. Complete the form and make a copy for your own records. Then mail it back to us in the envelope provided. We need this information to decide the next step in your treatment plan.

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You may resume taking your routine medicines. Do not take a bath or soak the site for 24 hours. You can take a shower the next day.

Sometimes, steroids can cause:

- Facial and neck flushing.
- Anxiety.
- Nervousness.
- Mood swings.
- Frequent urination.
- Trouble sleeping.

These symptoms most often occur within the first 24-48 hours and do not require any treatment. They should go away on their own within one week.

If you have diabetes, steroids may cause your blood sugar to rise. Make sure that your primary doctor is aware and that you know how to manage your blood sugars during this time.

If you have any questions or need to make a follow-up visit to discuss your results, please contact your doctor.

When to Call

- Any signs of infection.
- Fever more than 100.4°F by mouth for 2 readings taken 4 hours apart.
- Increased redness, swelling or drainage around the site.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 5/2024. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7915.