Advice following joint injection in the hand or wrist

Information for patients
The Sheffield Hand Centre
Why have I been given this leaflet?

You have been given this leaflet as you have had a joint injection to treat arthritis in your hand or wrist. In many cases this is the only treatment you will need. This means you are unlikely to be given a routine appointment to be seen again in The Sheffield Hand Centre.

We have provided the following information to help you understand what to expect and when to seek advice. We hope you will find this helpful and we wish you a good recovery.

What can I expect following my joint injection?

A couple of hours after the injection, when the local anaesthetic wears off, your hand or wrist is likely to be uncomfortable. We suggest you start taking painkillers, such as paracetamol, as soon as you arrive home to relieve the discomfort, and take them regularly for the next couple of days. The pain is likely to be stronger during the first few days but should improve in the next 7 to 10 days. You may notice a small bruise develop where the injection was done.

Is there anything I can do to help my recovery?

It is important to move your wrist, fingers and thumb regularly after your injection, even if they feel stiff.

Your hand may become swollen so it is important to keep it raised above your heart whenever possible for the first couple of days. This will also help to reduce any pain. You can elevate your hand by using a sling or by sitting with pillows or cushions so that your hand is level with your shoulder. You can also lie with your hand across your chest on a pillow or cushion.
What should I look out for after the injection?

Please contact the Hand Centre if you experience any of the following:

- Severe bruising and swelling, or
- Your injection site or the joint injected becomes red, hot and swollen - as this suggests an infection

If you have an infection you may need treatment with antibiotics. Out of hours, seek medical attention via a Walk-in Centre.

Will I need to be off work?

It is unusual for a joint injection to lead to time off work but if your symptoms deteriorate following your steroid injection you may need to take some time to rest whilst it recovers. You can self-certify for sickness absence for up to 5 days. Your GP can provide a sick note for you in the unlikely event that you need a longer period off work.

When can I return to normal activities?

Your hand can be used for light activities immediately after the injection. You can build up to normal activities over the next few days.

Can I drive after my injection?

There is not usually any problem with driving straight after the injection. If you are in pain afterwards it is advisable to wait until you are more comfortable. If you have any doubts you must check with your car insurance provider.

What can I expect over the next few months?

- Any improvement from steroid injections can last between 2 months and 2 years.
• It is possible to have several injections into the same joint, but no more than three within a year.
• If the injections are not successful then surgery may be considered.

If you continue to have problems with your hand please see your GP who can arrange for further treatment or for a referral back to the Hand Centre.

Who should I contact if I have any concerns or queries?

If you have a problem or need advice after going home please contact:

The Sheffield Hand Centre

• 0114 305 2364
  Monday to Friday: 7.00am – 8.00pm
  Saturday: 7.00am – 3.00pm

Outside of these hours when the Hand Centre is closed please ring:

The Surgical Assessment Centre

• 0114 226 9400

Alternatively you can contact:

• Your GP
• Local Walk-in Centre
• NHS helpline on 111

Alternative formats can be available on request.
Please email: alternativeformats@sth.nhs.uk

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