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PATIENT GUIDE TO KNEE INJECTIONS

What is a cortisone injection?

A cortisone injection consists of a steroid medication (cortisone or its derivative) and short and long acting numbing medication (lidocaine and marcaine).

How does a cortisone injection help?

The injection helps by providing medication directly to the area of inflammation to reduce pain and swelling.

How long will it take to work?

The numbing medicine usually sets in right away, within a few minutes. This can last for several hours. However, by the evening after the injection, this effect wears off, and the limb can be sore. It usually takes a few days for the steroid to take effect.

How long will the injection last?

The effect of steroid injections is variable. In some patients, the effect is very short lived (a few days). However, it is generally hoped that the injection will last up to 3 months. In many patients, the injection is enough to calm down the inflammation and pain so that the symptoms are completely resolved.

What are the possible side effects?

The side effects of cortisone injections are extremely low. However, possible side effects include: skin discoloration at the site of the injection; a steroid flare (increased discomfort within 48 hours of the injection); and an infection from penetrating the skin with the injection. Too many injections or injections too often can weaken the tissues.

When can I return to my activity?

The injection will not prevent you from returning to your usual activity, such as work. However, you should refrain from sports for the first few days to allow the steroid to begin working.