

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

JOINT AND SOFT TISSUE INJECTIONS

The purpose of this patient information leaflet is to inform those who are considering having a joint or soft tissue injection performed by their GP or Specialist.

There are a great number of joint and soft tissue conditions which present in General Practice and which respond very well to injections involving steroids.

Some of the commonest conditions are well known and include tennis elbow and frozen shoulder but there are also a number of less commonly known conditions affecting tendons around the wrist and hand and also affecting bursa and joints at various sites. In the paragraphs that follow I would like to mention some of the common, uncommon and rare side effects following a joint and soft tissue injection.

- **Common side effects following a joint/soft tissue injection.**

These injection procedures are sometimes painful at the time of injection and many will give rise to discomfort after the local anaesthetic has worn off. Sometimes this can last up to forty-eight hours after the injection. It is, therefore, wise to have some simple painkillers at hand to use in this situation. Usually paracetamol or Ibuprofen is sufficient. It is also advisable that the patient should be able to rest the joint, or the affected part, for two to three days.

- **Uncommon side effects following a joint/soft tissue injection.**

1. Lipodystrophy – This occurs when some of the steroid leaks just under the skin. Usually it occurs when the doctor is injecting soft tissue lesions which are just underneath the skin surface. It results in some minor dimpling at the injection site and is uncommon.
2. Depigmentation of the skin – Again this occurs when injecting conditions which are just beneath the skin. It gives rise to some depigmentation in a small area over the injection site. It is more commonly noticed if the skin is heavily pigmented.

- **Rare complications.**

The most serious complication following a joint injection is that of septic arthritis. The development of pain increasing in severity forty-eight hours after the injection may suggest this. It is a very rare complication but it is important to be aware of this and to seek immediate medical advice if pain is increasing forty-eight hours following the injection, or if there is significant swelling, redness or a fever.