Ultrasound is a harmless form of diagnostic imaging that uses sound waves to create a picture of internal structures. It is commonly used to evaluate some musculoskeletal structures and to guide procedures such as injection. As with all types of medical imaging it has limitations but can be particularly effective at assessing soft tissues such as tendons, nerves, ligaments, muscles, swellings and more. Ultrasound is used alongside a good clinical assessment to help enhance an understanding of your problem. Sometimes other forms of investigation may also be required.

**What to expect:** You will be seated or lying. You may be asked to remove items of clothing. Ultrasound gel is applied to the area of interest and the ultrasound probe is moved lightly across the area.

**If an ultrasound guided injection is appropriate:**

* The clinician will ask some questions and discuss some small risks of injection with you (allergic reaction, infection, skin thinning / colour change, facial flushing, menstrual irregularity) and ask you to sign a consent form (Please read the consent form before your appointment. This can be found on our website).
* PLEASE INFORM US if you are taking an ANTICOAGULANT (a drug that thins the blood) or ANTIBIOTIC, you are DIABETIC OR EPILEPTIC or HAVE ALLERGIES TO MEDICINE, this may affect the decision to inject.
* The ultrasound is then used to guide an injection.
* It is possible you will feel some discomfort during the injection.
* You will then be asked to have a seat in the waiting room for at least 20 minutes before you leave the clinic. Depending on the target of injection there may be some weakness or numbness that typically wears off after 4-8 hours but may take longer.
* It is a sensible precaution to have somebody drive you home as driving afterwards as an injection may affect your ability to drive and invalidate your motor insurance.
* You should try and rest for the remainder of the day but will able to return to work the next day. If you a physical job you might be advised to rest for longer after certain injections.
* The injected area can feel tender for a day or two. Very occasionally there may be an increase in more significant discomfort before the pain settles.
* You may notice some improvements after a few days but the full benefit can take longer, up to 4 weeks. If you do feel better following injection, resist the temptation to suddenly increase your activity.
* If the area injected becomes hot, red and more painful after a couple of days you should **CALL 111** for advice or see your doctor immediately, especially if you feel unwell, do not delay.

**Follow up:** The referring clinician will discuss your follow-up arrangements with you. If an ultrasound scan or injection was used, then our clinician will send a report to the referrer and a copy to your GP.

Following your ultrasound guided injections you can continue treatment with the Physiotherapy team and other forms of self-management, our clinician will guide you on this.

**Further questions:** Please contact us using the contact us form on our website: [www.advancedphysiosolutions.co.uk](http://www.advancedphysiosolutions.co.uk)

More information about steroid injections can be found on our website under the patient resources tab or at the link below:

 [**https://www.versusarthritis.org/media/1360/local-steroid-injections-information-booklet.pdf**](https://www.versusarthritis.org/media/1360/local-steroid-injections-information-booklet.pdf)

**Common questions asked have been summarised below using this link:**

**Why are local steroid injections prescribed?**

A local steroid injection is given to reduce inflammation and pain within a joint. They’re frequently recommended for people with rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis or pain if your joints or soft tissues are very painful or if you need additional pain relief to help you through a special occasion or event, and for sudden painful attacks caused by gout or calcium crystal diseases.

**What are the possible side-effects?**

Side-effects are very unlikely but occasionally people notice a flare-up in pain after an injection. This usually settles on its own within a couple of days but taking simple painkillers like Paracetamol will help. The mildest mixture is hydrocortisone. Methylprednisolone and triamcinolone are stronger and tend to be less soluble (dissolve less easily), so they stay in your joint for longer. Local steroid injections may sometimes cause facial flushing or interfere with the menstrual cycle. Other steroid-related side-effects are rare unless injections are given frequently (more than a few times per year). Any treatment with steroids may cause changes in mood – you may feel very high or very low. This may be more common in people with a previous history of mood disturbance, although is very rare with injections. If you’re worried, please discuss this with your doctor. It’s usual to see a rise in blood sugar levels for a few days after the injection if you have diabetes.

**What are the risks?**

Very rarely you may get an infection in the joint at the time of an injection. If your joint becomes more painful and hot you should see your doctor immediately, especially if you feel unwell, this can be very serious and needs rapid assessment. Injections can occasionally cause some thinning or changes in the colour of the skin at the injection site, particularly with stronger preparations. In very rare cases an injection of steroids can lead to an indentation in the skin around the area by wasting the fat under the skin, whilst rare and only cosmetic, this can be permanent.

Allergic reaction is a very rare but serious side effect of anaesthetic or steroid, if you have any breathing difficulties in the 24 hours following injection you should call an ambulance immediately.