

Corticosteroid Injections

What are potential risks and side effects of corticosteroids?

There are potential risks and side effects from steroid medications, however, side effects from a steroid injection tend to be rare. Side effects from steroids are more common when taken daily for several months. Risks and side effects may include, but are not limited to:

- A transient decrease in immunity
- High blood sugar
- Stomach ulcers
- Severe arthritis of the hips (avascular necrosis)
- Cataracts and glaucoma
- Transient flushing
- Increased appetite
- Worsening of mood disorders (i.e. depression, manic episodes)
- Fat atrophy and skin color changes at the site of injection
- Other rare/infrequent risks which may be presently unknown

Steroid injections should not be performed on patients who have a local or systemic bacterial infection, are pregnant (if fluoroscopy is used) or have bleeding problems. Steroid injections should also not be performed on patients whose pain is from a tumor or infection. If this is expected, an MRI scan should be done prior to the injection to rule out these conditions.