



Eytan Debbi, MD, PhD

Kyle Peterson, MS, PA-C

Hip & Knee Replacement · Hospital for Special Surgery

535 E 70th St, 9th Floor, New York, NY 10021

1133 Westchester Avenue, White Plains, NY 10065

TEL 212.606.1408 FAX 917.260.3808

hss.edu/debbi · edebbi.com

PATIENT GUIDE

Cortisone (Steroid) Injection

How to prepare for your knee or hip injection — and how to care for yourself afterward.

What is a cortisone injection?

Cortisone is a strong **anti-inflammatory steroid medicine**. We inject it directly into your knee or hip — usually with ultrasound guidance and often mixed with a numbing medicine. It works by **calming inflammation to relieve pain and stiffness**. It does not cure arthritis, but it can give meaningful relief that lasts weeks to several months. The visit usually takes about 15–30 minutes.

Before Your Injection

There is very little special preparation needed for a cortisone injection.

- Keep taking your usual medicines**, including NSAIDs (ibuprofen, Aleve) and your prescriptions, unless we tell you otherwise.
- If you have diabetes**, tell us. Cortisone can raise your blood sugar for a few days, so plan to **monitor it more closely** afterward.
- On blood thinners?** Tell us in advance (warfarin/Coumadin, Eliquis, Xarelto, Plavix). **Do not stop them on your own.**
- Tell us if you feel unwell** or think you may have an infection — we may reschedule.
- Eat normally** beforehand and **wear loose clothing** that lets us reach your knee or hip easily.
- Planning surgery soon?** Let us know — a recent steroid injection may affect the timing of a joint replacement.

Medications

Unlike PRP, cortisone does **not** require you to stop anti-inflammatory medicines.

Medication	What to do	Notes
NSAIDs ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), naproxen (Aleve), meloxicam (Mobic), celecoxib (Celebrex)	OK to continue	Helpful for a flare in the first days
Acetaminophen (Tylenol)	OK for pain	before & after
Diabetes medicines / insulin	Keep taking — monitor sugar	May run high for a few days
Blood thinners warfarin, Eliquis, Xarelto, Plavix, daily cardiac aspirin	Do not stop — call us	Tell us in advance

When in doubt about any medicine, call our office before stopping or starting it.

The Day of Your Injection

- Eat normally and take your usual medicines. No fasting is needed.
- We clean the skin and inject the cortisone, using ultrasound to guide the needle precisely.
- The numbing medicine may make the joint feel **much better within minutes**. This relief can wear off after a few hours — that’s normal, before the cortisone takes effect.
- Expect a brief pinch and some pressure. Mild soreness afterward is normal.
- Plan to **rest the joint for the remainder of the day**. Most patients drive themselves home.

After Your Injection — What to Expect

A little soreness in the first day or two is common before the relief sets in.

Days 0–2 · Possible “steroid flare”

Some patients feel **increased soreness** for a day or two before the cortisone kicks in. This is normal. Rest, ice for comfort (15–20 min), and you may use **NSAIDs or Tylenol** for pain. Take it easy on the joint.

Days 2–5 · Relief begins

The cortisone starts to work and pain and stiffness ease. Resume normal everyday activity as it feels comfortable.

Weeks & beyond · Lasting relief

Relief typically lasts **several weeks to a few months**, and varies from person to person. Continue physical therapy if it has been prescribed for you.

If you have diabetes

Cortisone can raise your blood sugar for **3–7 days**. Check your levels more often than usual and follow your diabetes care plan. Call your primary doctor if your sugars run very high.

When to Expect Results

- Relief usually begins within **2–5 days**, sometimes up to a week.
- How long it lasts varies widely — from a **few weeks to several months**.
- For safety, cortisone injections in the same joint are generally spaced **at least 3 months apart**.
- If the injection helps but wears off, we'll discuss **next steps** together.

When to Call Us

Soreness for a day or two is normal. Contact our office if you notice any of the following:

- × Fever above **101°F (38.3°C)** or chills.
- × Increasing **redness, warmth, swelling, or drainage/pus** at the injection site.
- × Severe or worsening pain that lasts **beyond 2–3 days**.
- × Blood sugars that are **very high and hard to control** (if you have diabetes).

Call 911 for chest pain, shortness of breath, or calf pain and swelling.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does it hurt?

You'll feel a brief pinch and some pressure. Any soreness usually settles within a day or two.

Can I take ibuprofen?

Yes. Unlike PRP, cortisone does not require stopping NSAIDs. They can actually help with a flare in the first days.

Can I drive myself home?

Yes. These injections are done without sedation. Arrange a ride if walking is difficult.

When can I shower?

Keep the bandage dry for 24 hours, then you may shower. Avoid baths, pools, and hot tubs for 48 hours.

How often can I get a cortisone shot?

Generally no more than every 3 months in the same joint, to protect the cartilage. We'll track this with you.

When can I return to work?

Desk work is usually fine the same or next day. For physically demanding jobs, allow 1–2 days.

Questions? We're here to help.

Eytan Debbi, MD, PhD · Kyle Peterson, MS, PA-C
Hip & Knee Replacement, Hospital for Special Surgery

TEL 212.606.1408 **FAX** 917.260.3808

hss.edu/debbi · edebbi.com

This guide is general information for patients of our practice and does not replace your provider's specific instructions. If your instructions differ from this handout, follow what your care team has told you.