



HYALURONIC ACID (HA) INJECTION

Patient information

Patient information leaflet for hyaluronic acid (HA) injection

Hyaluronic acid (HA) injections can give some reduction in the pain of osteoarthritic joints. However, the improvements are usually temporary (lasting a maximum of 6-9 months). HA injections are generally very safe, although occasionally patients may experience some side effects after treatment. The aim of this patient information leaflet is to provide you with the necessary information regarding your treatment.

We ask all patients to provide written consent prior to booking an injection to ensure they have read and understood the information provided.

Whilst we do not require a doctor to refer you for an injection, we will supply you with a report after the procedure which we suggest you forward to your GP for your medical records.

What are hyaluronic acid injections and how are they used?

Hyaluronic acid occurs naturally within the body. The hyaluronic acid used in injections is a synthesised (man-made) version of this substance. HA injections are sometimes recommended for people with osteoarthritic conditions (wear and tear of joints), which may cause pain. A range of hyaluronic acid injections exist. Some patients may require a series of injections and some injections can be delivered as a one-off treatment.

What happens when I have a hyaluronic acid injection?

The clinician, who will be performing your injection, will choose the most appropriate hyaluronic acid for your condition and symptoms. They will usually inject the HA directly into the area where you have the pain, such as a joint. Most injections are quick and easy to perform.

An ultrasound scan can be used to find out more about where the pain and osteoarthritis is, and also to deliver the injection more precisely.

What happens after the injection?

If you have a local anaesthetic your pain may be relieved within minutes, but the effect will usually wear off after an hour or two. It usually takes several days (even up to a couple of weeks) for the effect of the HA to become apparent. You might wish to arrange alternative transport home after your injection, especially if you are having a local anaesthetic which may cause some numbness and make it difficult to drive. If you are having an injection into a joint, you may be advised to avoid strenuous exercise for two or three days afterwards due to potential post-injection discomfort. If you are having an injection around a tendon, you may be asked to avoid heavy impact and loading activities for a few days, again due to potential discomfort after the injection.

Will I need another injection?

If you find the hyaluronic acid injection helpful, and other treatments have been unsuitable or have not helped, the injection may be repeated. There is currently no research evidence to suggest any long term harm to tissues from having repeat injections of hyaluronic acid.

Potential risks and side effects.

Most people have HA injections without any side effects. A full list of potential risks and side effects are listed below.

Post injection flare

Some people (around 20-30%) may have some pain for a day or two after the injection (post injection flare), but this usually resolves quickly and can be managed with relative rest and over-the-counter painkillers. A much smaller proportion may have a more significant level of pain which will last for up to a week.

Very rarely patients experience a much more severe pain and swelling (known as pseudo-sepsis) which requires medical review to ensure there is no infection.

Will it hurt?

It can be a bit uncomfortable at the time of the injection, but many people find that it is not as bad as they initially feared.

Infection

Very rarely (approximately 1:50,000 injections) you may get an infection in the area of the injection. If the joint becomes more painful, hot and swollen, and/or you are feeling hot, nauseous and unwell you must seek medical attention immediately e.g., go to your local accident and emergency department (A&E). You should inform the medical professional examining you that you have recently had a hyaluronic acid injection into your joint as they may need to give you antibiotics.

To minimise this risk, the treating clinician will sterilise the area prior to injection and cover it with a plaster afterwards. It is important that you keep the injection site clean and dry until it has healed (normally 24 hours post injection). You can shower/wash in the 24 hours post injection but keep the area clean and apply a new plaster afterwards.

Anaphylaxis

It is extremely rare to have an allergic reaction to hyaluronic acid or local anaesthetic (1:500,000). This would usually happen within the first few minutes of an injection and requires immediate medical attention. Very rarely the allergic reaction can be delayed. The symptoms you might experience are feeling lightheaded or faint, breathing difficulties (such as fast, shallow breathing and/or wheezing), a fast heartbeat, clammy skin, confusion and anxiety, collapsing or losing consciousness.

You will be asked to remain in the clinic for 20 minutes following the injection to allow for observation of possible adverse reactions.

Other potential side effects

There are very few other reported side effects that have been linked with the use of hyaluronic acid.

Can I take other medicines along with the hyaluronic acid?

Yes, you can take other medications alongside the hyaluronic acid injection. There are no known significant drug interactions that occur with hyaluronic acid. However, if you are taking a blood-thinning drug, such as Warfarin, you may need a blood test to make sure that your blood is not too thin to have the injection. This is because of the risk of bleeding into the joint at the time of the injection. Therefore, you must tell the clinician giving the injection if you are taking an anticoagulant as they may need to discuss this with your GP before giving you the injection.

Pregnancy and breastfeeding

Unfortunately, we are not able to offer hyaluronic acid injection to patients who are pregnant without receiving specific consent from their GP. There are currently no known associated risks to having HA injection whilst breastfeeding, although you might still wish to discuss with your GP first.

Below is a summary of the risks/side effects of having hyaluronic acid injections:

Serious side effects are rare but can include:

- Joint and soft tissue infections – requires urgent medical attention.
- Anaphylaxis (allergic reaction) – requires urgent medical attention.
- Very rarely, severe pain and swelling (known as pseudo-sepsis) – requires medical assessment.

Other potential side effects include:

- Post injection flare – usually mild and settles within a few days, but occasionally can be more severe and last up to a week.
- Your clinician is highly trained and will take every appropriate step to avoid injecting or traumatising any soft tissue structures, nerves or vessels when performing the injection, but there is always a very small risk that this could occur, particularly with injections at certain locations.

You will be asked to remain in the clinic for 20 minutes following the injection to allow for observation of possible adverse reactions.

If you have any questions regarding the information contained in this leaflet, please call 02074823875 or email injections@complete-physio.co.uk and we will arrange for one of our clinical specialists to speak with you.