

# What to Expect From Your Shoulder “Cortisone” Injection

## What is cortisone?

“Cortisones” (corticosteroids) are strong acting anti-inflammation medications.

## Why does the cortisone shot contain a numbing medication?

The cortisone shot that you had also contained a local anesthetic. This helps your surgeon determine if the cortisone actually reached the source of pain. If it did, then you might have excellent relief of pain for one or more hours; the cortisone takes longer to work (see below).

## How long does it take for the cortisone to work?

The cortisone itself usually takes up to 3-5 days to work. If you are in a physical therapy program, then you should wait 5-7 days before you resume therapy.

## Can cortisone shots cure shoulder pain?

In some cases cortisone shots can eliminate pain indefinitely.

## Could the pain become worse temporarily?

Approximately 5-10% of patients have a flare-up of pain in the first 1-3 days after the cortisone shot. Treat this with rest, ice packs, and pain medications. Flushing of your face can also occur for the first few days after the injection. This can be treated with an anti-inflammatory medication.

## How many cortisone shots can be given in the same location?

If the pain relief from the cortisone shot lasts 2-3 or more months, then a second shot can be given to see if surgery can be avoided. Additional cortisone shots in the same location can be given as long as they are *at least 3 months apart*.

*Usually up to 3 shots in one year can be given in the same location. After that consideration should be given for surgery. Too many cortisone shots can weaken tendons.*

## How do I know if I need surgery?

Surgery can be considered if the relief from the cortisone/anesthetic shot is brief:

- In some cases this could mean only a few hours.
- In some cases this could mean a few days or weeks.

***In other words, if you had excellent pain relief after the shot, but the relief was brief, then you might be a candidate for surgery. Dr. Skedros is a shoulder expert and he can help you make this decision.***