INTRALESIONAL STEROID INJECTION

What is intralesional steroid therapy? This is a procedure involving the injection of a steroid solution into abnormal skin, with the aim of improving its appearance or reducing symptoms. The steroid preparation most frequently used in this procedure is called Kenalog (triamcinolone acetonide) or Celestone (betamethasone sodium phosphate and betamethasone acetate).

How do steroids work? Corticosteroids have a variety of properties, but it is their effects on suppressing inflammation that are particularly utilized in the treatment of skin conditions.

The injection of a steroid into the skin has two advantages over topical and oral steroid treatment; firstly, it will often be more effective in treating deep-seated conditions than a steroid cream or ointment, and secondly, it will have only a local effect rather than the general effects of a steroid taken by mouth.

What conditions can be treated with intralesional steroid? The most common uses of intralesional steroid therapy are in the treatment of excess scar tissue (hypertrophic or keloid scars), acne cysts and alopecia areata (a form of hair loss). However, your dermatologist may recommend it for a variety of localized inflammatory disorders. Depending on the condition being treated, you may be offered further treatment sessions several weeks apart.

What are the side effects of this treatment?

Immediate side effects:

- **Pain** - the procedure is usually well-tolerated, although injections into certain parts of the body, such as the palms and soles, can be more uncomfortable. Local anesthesia can be used to reduce pain of the procedure.
- **Bleeding** - spots of blood may occur at the injection sites.
- **Infection** - occasionally infection can be introduced by the injections, and this may develop into an abscess, requiring antibiotic therapy.
- **Allergic reaction** - this is very uncommon, but may occur to one of the constituents of the injection preparation.

Subsequent side effects:

- **Atrophy** *(thinning of the skin)* - this is confined to the area that has been injected, and results in a slight dimpling of the skin surface. Very rarely, the skin may ulcerate.
- **Telangiectasia** - the small blood vessels within the treated area become much more visible than normal.
- **Pigmentation changes** - the skin at and around the treatment site may lighten or darken in color, especially in dark-skinned people.
- **Treatment may not be effective, or the condition may recur.**

Intralesional steroid therapy is, by and large, a safe procedure, and will not cause you to put on weight or develop excess hair. The amount of steroid injected at any one time is small, and the risk of steroid being absorbed into the bloodstream in sufficient amounts to produce internal side effects is very low.