

EPIDURAL STEROID INJECTION

Frequently Asked Questions

What is an epidural steroid injection? An epidural steroid injection is an injection of local anesthetic and steroid deposited into the epidural space. The epidural space is a space located in the spine just outside of the sac containing spinal fluid. The goal of an epidural steroid injection is to provide pain relief by reducing the inflammation (swelling) of the nerve roots as they exit the spine. An epidural steroid injection will not correct the preexisting medical problem but reduce the level of pain. It is not unusual for someone to need more than one injection to get a long term benefit. The injections can be done in a series about a week to a month apart if needed. If the pain is significantly improved no further injections are needed, unless the pain begins to come back.

Will the injection hurt a lot? Most people say the stinging/burning of the numbing medicine is the most uncomfortable part of the procedure.

What happens during the actual procedure? The back or neck is cleansed with antiseptic solution. A sterile drape is placed. The skin is anesthetized (numbed) with local anesthetic. This is felt as a stinging or burning sensation. The needle is then advanced into the epidural space. Pressure is the usual sensation felt, if pain is felt, more local anesthetic will be used. Once in the epidural space the medication is infused and the procedure is complete. Your skin will be cleansed and a bandage will be applied. The bandage can be removed in the next morning. Your will be checked and discharged home when your blood pressure is stable.

How will I feel after the injection? Most people don't feel any different immediately after the injection though the pain may be temporarily improved. The steroid takes two to three days to start to have an effect in most people. Therefore, it may be awhile before you feel a decrease in your pain.

Some local tenderness may be experienced for a couple of days after the injection. Using an ice pack three or four times a day will help this. You may also take your usual pain medications as ordered.

What are the risks of the procedure? The main risk that occurs at a rate of approximately 1/100 is the risk of dural puncture. A dural puncture occurs when the needle is unintentionally advanced one layer beyond the epidural space and punctures the membrane that surrounds spinal fluid. If this occurs, there is a risk of developing a spinal headache. Which may be severe and may last for days. There is a procedure called a blood patch that can treat the headache if it occurs. For other specific risks please speak with a nurse in the office.

Some short term side effects may occur. If local anesthetic spreads to nearby nerves you may have weakness or numbness that can last for 1-2 hours. You may have increased pain for a few days after the injection. Diabetics may have short term elevation of blood sugars. People prone to fluid retention may have an increase in fluid retention for 1-2 weeks.

Will I have restrictions on the day of procedure? You may not drive for the remainder of the day after your injection. No heat is to be used in the injected area for the remainder of the day. No tub or soaking in water for the remainder of the day.

Note: This procedure cannot be performed if you have an active infection, flu, cold, fever, or very high blood pressure. Please make us aware of these