

Epidural Steroid Injection

General Information

Your doctor has determined that an epidural injection would be helpful in treating your chronic pain condition. The epidural space is an area that allows access to discs and nerves. Placing medication in this area can help treat your pain, depending on the area of the body injected. The epidural space can be accessed from various approaches. One technique is from the back of the spine. This is called the interlaminar injection. When it is done from the side where the nerve exits the spine, it is called a transforaminal injection. These injections are commonly performed to treat a variety of pain syndromes, including:

- Back pain
- Leg pain/Sciatica
- Neck pain
- Arm pain (radiating from the neck)
- Spinal Stenosis
- Herpes Zoster/Post herpetic Neuralgia
- Disc pain

Procedure Information: What to Expect

Prior to the injection appointment, there may be some medications that need to be stopped, and your health care provider will discuss these with you. They could include blood-thinning (anticoagulant), antiplatelet medications and/or anti-inflammatory medications such as aspirin, Xarelto, Coumadin, Plavix etc.

You will be escorted to the procedure room. You will lay on your stomach (facing down) on a pillow or gel supports with your back or neck exposed. An X-ray/fluoroscope is used to see the bones to guide needle placement. After a cold, cleaning solution is placed on your skin, it is important not to touch the area once it is cleaned. You will then feel a pinch and a burn (much like a bee sting), which is the local anesthetic (numbing medicine). After that, you will feel a pressure and a poke. Once the epidural space is accessed, contrast dye is commonly used to ensure proper needle placement. Then, the epidural medication is injected, which can include steroid, normal saline, and/or local anesthetic. Band-Aids/paper tape is applied to the injection sites.

You are then escorted to the post-operative area where you will be monitored for up to 30 minutes after the injection. When you are ready to leave, the staff will give you discharge instructions and help you make a follow up appointment if one hasn't been made already.

Post-Procedure Instructions

What should I do after the injection?

- Recommend taking it easy for the rest of the day
- You **MAY** do normal routine activities such as return to work, do household tasks etc.
- **DO NOT** participate in strenuous activities
- Resume all medications as instructed by your provider
- You should not be in sitting water (baths, hot tubs, swimming pools, lakes/ponds) for three (3) days after the procedure. **Showers are OK**
- May participate in formal physical therapy sessions 72 hours after your procedure. You may continue performing your home exercise program in the interim
- Keep post-operative appointment to report relief

When will I notice relief?

- Immediate pain relief from the local anesthetic used in the injectate for some time
- Corticosteroids usually take two (2) or three (3) days to start working but can take up to seven (7) to ten (10) days

How long can I expect relief?

- The extent and duration of pain relief may depend on the amount of disc or nerve root inflammation
 - If your pain is caused by an injury to more than one area of the spine/muscles, only some of your symptoms will be helped by a single injection
- In some cases, a single injection brings long-term pain relief
- **Intended goal is >50% relief for several weeks to months. If so, you may be a candidate for a repeat epidural injection no sooner than three (3) months (max 4 epidurals/12 months)**
 - If this is your **FIRST** epidural in this part of the spine **AND** you have **<50% relief**, in some cases you may receive a second epidural **AFTER 2 weeks** by changing the location, approach (transforaminal vs interlaminar) or medication injected
 - This is dependent on your insurance and can be discussed by your provider in the office
 - You **WILL** need to have an office visit prior to ordering any repeat epidural to document relief from previous injection(s), updated location of pain, recent physical exam and any pertinent imaging results for insurance approval

What other things can I expect?

- Numbness or tingling or transient weakness in the area of pain (typically will go away within 4 to 6 hours)
- Some soreness around the injection site for which ice may be applied
- Elevation in blood glucose for 2-3 days (especially if you are diabetic)

Please contact our office (815) 398-9491 if you experience:

- Significant weakness in the arms or legs for more than 24 hours
- Redness or swelling around injection site for more than 24 hours
- Bladder or bowel accidents and/or numbness around the groin
- Fever or chills