



Lumbar Epidural Injection

WHY HAVE THIS PROCEDURE?

This procedure may be offered as part of a package of care to improve the back pain and/or leg pain that you experience. A steroid medication is injected through a needle, into your epidural space: the area that surrounds your spinal cord. Your pain specialist may guide a needle directly into your epidural space, if you have general back pain or may be aiming for the epidural space around specific nerves that may be responsible for shooting leg pains. Often pain is caused by narrowing where the nerves leave the spine, causing inflammation in nerves, which steroids aim to counteract.

The steroids used for pain management are not the anabolic type (bodybuilding) steroids; they are anti-inflammatory steroids, which can reduce swelling and inflammation that are sometimes responsible for painful conditions.

THE PROCEDURE

This will be carried out in the operating theatre by one of our pain specialists unless otherwise indicated.

An experienced anaesthetist may be present and may offer you a mild sedative if appropriate.

You will be positioned lying on your front (face down).

X-rays will be taken of your back to allow accurate placement of the needle(s) and reduce the risks of side effects.

Your pain specialist will use local anaesthetic to numb your skin before the procedure begins.

Please tell your pain specialist if you experience pain during the procedure.

Once the needle is in position, local anaesthetic mixed with an anti-inflammatory steroid will be injected.

AFTER THE PROCEDURE

You will be monitored in the recovery area by nursing staff.

Your pain specialist may assess you before you are discharged from hospital. You may feel drowsy if you have had any sedation, and should not drive for the rest of the day.

You should have someone to collect you from the hospital.

The following day you may return to your usual activities.

COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

A flare up of your pain, for a short time may occur.

Bleeding or bruising at the injection site.

Temporary drop in blood pressure.

STEROID SIDE EFFECTS

Steroids can cause some side effects. If you have diabetes, you should monitor your blood sugar carefully for about one week after your procedure because sometimes steroids can raise your blood sugars.

RARE SIDE EFFECTS

These injections are very safe but it is important that you are aware of any side effects, even if they are rare and do not occur very commonly.

- Severe headache (1 in 200), which is sometimes treated by an epidural blood patch.
- Damage nerves (1 in 10,000).
- Allergy, including severe allergic reaction.
- Numbness.
- Infection.
- Paralysis – very rare.
- Injection into a blood vessel causing a toxic reaction – very rare.

MEDICATIONS

It is vital your pain specialist is aware of all your medications and known allergies.

If you take blood thinning medication, such as warfarin or clopidogrel (Plavix), and these were not discussed at your outpatient appointment, please contact us before your procedure.

Aspirin is generally ok prior to your procedure but please confirm with our team.

Do not cease your regular pain medications; these can be taken with a small sip of water on the morning of your procedure.