

INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR PROCEDURE

LUMBAR EPIDURAL STEROID INJECTION

How we do the procedure

A **lumbar epidural steroid injection** is usually done to treat pain from a disk degeneration or herniation, scar tissue from prior surgery or a vertebral body compression fracture. Occasionally, it is done to treat postherpetic neuralgia (post shingles pain). It is performed between the posterior spines of the spinal column in the back at the location where your pain originates. You will be lying face down on the procedure table with a pillow under your abdomen. Your back will be cleansed with Betadine and a sterile drape will cover the area. Local anesthetic will be injected to numb the area.

A small needle is inserted at this location and advanced to the epidural space. An x-ray (fluoroscopy) machine is used to ensure proper needle placement. Once we identify the epidural space, we will inject a steroid (NOT the kind that increases muscle size in athletes) and a local anesthetic agent to bathe the structures that are inflamed (disk and nerve roots) which should help to decrease your pain.

What to expect

The local anesthetic may decrease your pain or take it all away and leave a numb feeling. Rarely, you may have a little numbness or muscle weakness in your legs for a few hours. Once the local anesthetic has worn off, typically after several hours, your pain may return. The steroid will begin to work in 1-5 days to reduce inflammation. We will schedule you for another injection in 2 weeks. If you have minimal or no pain 2 days prior to your next injection, call our office and we will change your appointment to a follow-up visit. There is a limit of 3 steroid injections in a 10 month period. If no substantial effects are obtained after one or two injections, we will discuss other alternatives.

Risks

The risks include bleeding, infection and a reaction to any of the medications used for the procedure. We use sterile technique to avoid infections. If you are taking a "blood thinner" (anticoagulant), we will give you special instructions before the procedure to avoid excess bleeding.

You could experience a spinal headache, but this is rare and easily treated.

Safety Precautions

Since your ability to drive may be impaired for a few hours, we ask that you have someone drive you home.

Injected steroids occasionally cause nervousness, difficulty sleeping, a flushed feeling (like hot flashes), an increased appetite, an elevated blood sugar, or a "moon face" (rounded face) for several days.