

INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR PROCEDURE

THORACIC EPIDURAL STEROID INJECTION

How we do the procedure

A **thoracic epidural steroid injection** is usually done to treat pain from a disk degeneration or herniation, scarring after disk 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 table with several pillows under your chest. Your back will be cleansed with betadine and a sterile drape will cover the area. We will use an x-ray (fluoroscopy) machine to guide needle placement. After using local anesthetic to numb the area, a needle is inserted at this location and advanced to the epidural space. We will use an x-ray (fluoroscopy) machine so that we can be sure of where the needle is placed. Once we identify the epidural space, we will inject a long-acting steroid (NOT the kind that increases muscle size in athletes) and, in some cases, 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

You may have some numbness around the area injected for a few hours. Once the local anesthetic has worn off, typically after several hours, your pain may return. Typically a long-acting steroid (NOT the kind that increases muscle size in athletes) is injected as well and will begin to work in 1-5 days to reduce inflammation. We will schedule 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. If no substantial effects are obtained after one or two injections, we will discuss other alternatives with you.

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. (Steroids are used occasionally for this procedure.)