



PROCEDURE INFORMATION

LUMBAR TRANSFORAMINAL EPIDURAL STEROID INJECTION

FOR BACK PAIN

A lumbar transforaminal epidural steroid injection is a simple procedure for treating back, buttock, leg, and foot pain. This information sheet will explain what it is. Your doctor can explain if this procedure is appropriate for you.

WHAT IS THE EPIDURAL SPACE?

The dura is a protective covering of the spinal cord and its nerves. The space surrounding the dura is called the epidural space. In the low back it is called the lumbar epidural space.

WHAT CAUSES PAIN IN THE EPIDURAL SPACE?

The lumbar spine has 5 bones, called vertebrae. Soft disks between these vertebrae cushion them and allow for spinal motion.

If a disc tears, chemicals inside may leak out and the disc could bulge or herniate. This can inflame nerve roots or the dura, and cause pain.

Bone spurs called osteophytes can also press against nerve roots and cause pain.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE DISC OR NERVE ROOT PAIN?

If you have pain in your back when you move, you may have lumbar disc and dural inflammation. If pain travels to your leg when you move your back, you may have nerve root inflammation.

Common tests such as MRI scan can show disc bulges and nerve root compression, but may not show a torn and leaking disc. A lumbar epidural injection can help to determine if disc problems, or dural, or nerve root inflammation are causing your pain.

WHAT IS A LUMBAR TRANSFORAMINAL EPIDURAL STEROID INJECTION?

In a lumbar epidural steroid injection, an anesthetic and a steroid are injected into the epidural space to relieve inflammation. When the procedure is done from the side it is called a transforaminal injection. This technique puts the medication near the source of inflammation.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING AN INJECTION?

The injection may start with an IV (medicine given intravenously) to help you relax. A local anesthetic may be used to numb your skin.

The doctor will then insert a thin needle into the epidural space. Fluoroscopy, a type of x-ray, may be used to ensure the safe and proper position of the needle. A dye may also be injected to ensure the needle is in the correct location.

Once the physician is sure the needle is correctly placed, an anesthetic and steroid will be injected.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER AN INJECTION?

You will be monitored for up to 30 minutes after the injection. When you are ready to leave, the clinic will give you the discharge instructions. You will also be given a pain diary. It is important to fill this out because it helps your doctor know how the injection is working.

It may help to move your back in ways that hurt before the injection, to see if the pain is still there, but do not overdo it. Take it easy for the rest of the day.

You may feel immediate pain relief and numbness in your back and leg(s) for up to 6 hours after the injection. This tells you the medication has reached the right location.

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Your pain may return after this short pain-free period, or may even be a little worse for a day or 2. This is normal. It may be caused by needle irritation or by the steroid itself. Steroids usually take 2 or 3 days to begin working, but can take as long as one week.

You can usually return to work the next day, but always check with your doctor.

HOW LONG CAN I EXPECT PAIN RELIEF?

How long you can expect relief depends on how many areas are injured, and on the amount of inflammation.

Sometimes an injection can bring several months of pain relief, and then more treatment is needed. Other times one injection brings long-term pain relief. If your pain is caused by injury to more than one area, only some of your symptoms may be helped by one injection.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND SIDE EFFECTS?

As with all invasive medical procedures, there are potential risks. Risks are rare, but may include infection, bleeding, allergic reaction, headache, dural puncture, temporary numbness or tingling, weakness, and nerve injury.

Side effects are rare and, when they occur, are usually due to the steroid itself. These include, but are not limited to, pain at the injection site, headache, increased blood sugar, water retention, facial flushing, irritability, sleeplessness, burst of energy, and skin discoloration at the injection site.

You should contact your doctor or go to the emergency room if you experience any of the following symptoms: Severe headaches with nausea or vomiting, fever greater than 101°F, loss of control of bowel or bladder function, severe pain, and/or loss of function or feeling in the arms or legs.

THIS PAMPHLET IS FOR GENERAL EDUCATION ONLY. SPECIFIC QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS SHOULD ALWAYS BE DIRECTED TO YOUR PROVIDER. YOUR PROVIDER CAN EXPLAIN POSSIBLE RISKS OR SIDE EFFECTS AND OTHER READILY AVAILABLE TREATMENT OPTIONS