

Care Gram

Epidural Steroid Injection

An Epidural steroid injection is a non-surgical treatment option used to relieve chronic low back pain. The pain relief can last from 1 week to 1 year. The treatment is also used to help with a sudden onset of severe back pain. The relief of pain may help you to be able to take part in other programs to prevent back pain.

How the Procedure Works

An epidural is the injection of a steroid medicine (anti-inflammatory) into the painful area of your back. It goes into the epidural space in the spine. It is used to reduce the swelling of nerve root tissue that may be causing pain. Below is a list of some of the health problems that an epidural steroid injection may help:

- Herniated discs
- Bulging discs
- Degenerative disc disease
- Spinal stenosis
- Spondylolisthesis
- Facet joint arthrosis
- Osteoarthritis of the spine
- Lumbar radiculopathy

About 50% of people will have less pain after an epidural injection or a series of several injections. The injections are usually done once a month for 3 months.

Risks of the Procedure

- There is a small risk of infection
- Bleeding is a rare problem

The epidural injection may cause a headache (spinal headache) after the treatment. It usually gets better in a few days

Since there is not a spinal cord in the area where the epidural injection goes, paralysis is not a risk of the treatment.



**Licking Memorial
Health Systems**

1320 West Main Street • Newark, OH 43055
(740) 348 - 4000 • www.LMHealth.org

1616-0570
09/2010
Page 1 of 2

Side Effects

Side effects are usually rare. If the steroid injections are given in large doses or over long periods of time, they may have negative side effects. Some of these are:

- Increased blood sugar levels
- Osteoporosis
- Lowered immune system response
- Cataracts
- Increased/decreased appetite
- Emotional fluctuations
- Damaged tissue of the hip joint
- Upset stomach and diarrhea

Allowing Time

The treatment usually takes about 10 to 15 minutes. You should allow 1 ½ hours for the entire visit.

Preparation

Nothing to eat or drink for 4 hours prior to the procedure. Plan to have someone drive you home after your procedure.

Registration

Report to the John and Mary Alford Pavilion entrance and proceed to the second floor 15 to 30 minutes before your scheduled appointment time.

During an Epidural Steroid Injection

- You will be asked to rate your pain before and after the treatment, with a scale of 0 to 10
 - Zero is no pain and 10 is your worst pain
- First, the nurse will help you into a sitting or lying position and will support you during the treatment
- You will also be asked to arch and push out your back
- The anesthesiologist cleans an area of your back for treatment - a sterile drape and antiseptic wash are applied
- Your back may be numbed with a numbing medicine - you should only feel pressure during the treatment
- The anesthesiologist inserts a thin needle into your back and identifies the correct area for injection
- Then, the medicine will be injected - you may feel a sensation going down one or both of your legs
- The needle is removed -your back is cleaned and a bandage is applied if needed

After the Procedure

You may need to lie down for a short time after the treatment. Your blood pressure may be taken.

The Results

The results of the treatment could last a lifetime. Since every person is different, the results cannot be predicted. You might have other injuries that could cause problems. The natural aging process could also cause problems. Keep in mind, the epidural steroid injection only treats the swelling and pain caused by another health problem.

At the LMH Pain Clinic, about 50% of the people seen will not need surgery. Talk to your pain doctor about future treatment options that will work for you.