



PATIENT TEACHING HANDOUT

Epidural Steroid Injection

What is an epidural steroid injection?

An epidural steroid injection is placement of corticosteroid medication through a needle into the epidural space in the spine. The epidural space is the area around the spinal nerves, next to the tough covering that surrounds them, called the dura.

What are the goals of an epidural steroid injection?

- to reduce and possibly eliminate pain,
- to increase function, and
- to possibly eliminate the need for surgery.

How will an epidural steroid injection help my condition?

The corticosteroid medication is similar to the corticosteroid chemical that is normally manufactured by your body. Corticosteroids act to decrease inflammation and swelling that can cause pain and limit function.

To obtain the best benefit with the least side effects, the amount of corticosteroid in an epidural steroid injection is carefully monitored. You will be limited to no more than 3 of these procedures in a 6-month period.

How do I prepare for an epidural steroid injection?

- If you are taking any anticoagulant ("blood thinner") medication, tell your doctor before scheduling the procedure.
- You are not permitted to drive after your procedure. You must have someone to drive you home.
- Unless your doctor advises otherwise, 10 days before your procedure, STOP taking any Aspirin-containing products.
- Starting 3 days before your procedure, STOP taking any nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil), or naproxen (Aleve).
- You may eat a light meal before your procedure.

What happens during an epidural steroid injection?

- You will be positioned lying face down with pillows for comfort.
- The area for the injection will be washed with an antiseptic solution and covered with sterile drapes.
- The doctor will inject local anesthetic to numb the injection site.
- An X-ray machine (fluoroscopy) and ultrasound machine will be used to guide placement of the injection.
- You will feel pressure while the doctor finds the epidural space and while the medication is injected into the space. For your comfort, the doctor will inject the medication slowly.

How long is the procedure?

The entire procedure takes about 10 minutes to perform.

What happens after the procedure?

- The steroid medication takes 48 – 72 hours after your procedure to begin working.
- You may continue taking regularly scheduled medications.
- The day after your procedure, you may resume normal daily activities.
- You may have pain, bruising, and soreness for 2-3 days after the procedure. Use ice to alleviate the soreness.
- You will be instructed to call Pittsburgh Pain Physicians 1 week later with an update on your pain relief.

Please call Pittsburgh Pain Physicians if you notice any of the following: increased pain, swelling, redness, fever, severe headache, or worsening weakness in your arms or legs. If you are diabetic, your blood sugar may increase slightly after the procedure. Diabetic patients should monitor their blood sugar closely for 5 days following the procedure.

If you have any questions or concerns about this procedure please call Pittsburgh Pain Physicians at **412-533-2202**.

