

Cervical, Thoracic, Lumbar and Caudal Epidural

For the treatment of pain

What is an epidural injection?

The term 'epidural injection' refers to the injection of corticosteroids and local anaesthetic into the epidural space (between the inner and outer coverings of the spinal cord), to treat pain caused by irritation and inflammation of spinal nerves.

Epidural injections can be performed along the vertebral column

- A cervical epidural is in to the neck
- A thoracic epidural is in the upper part of your back
- A lumbar epidural is in the lower part of your back
- A caudal epidural is at the base of your spine

An epidural injection is thought to work partly by calming the nerves that transmit the pain, by the use of corticosteroids which have a strong anti-inflammatory property. The pain is also blocked to allow the body to start recovering.

What are the benefits of epidurals?

The main benefit of an epidural injection is to reduce pain, but the effect may vary from person to person. Most patients will receive good pain relief for weeks or months.

Are there any risks?

There are risks associated with any procedure, including infection and bleeding at the site of injection. Reactions to the medications can occur but are quite unusual. Injuries to nerves and nerve roots are possible, but extremely rare.

What are the alternatives?

Alternatives will have been discussed with you at your consultation. Depending on your particular situation these can include measures such as acupuncture, medication, physiotherapy and more rarely, surgery.

Before your procedure

You may eat and drink normally prior to this treatment. For certain procedures you may be asked to fast. If this is the case, you will be notified at the time of booking your admission date. Please arrive in good time for your appointment. We do not recommend that you drive yourself home, so please arrange to have someone with you or to collect you.

Tell the doctor if:

- You are taking Aspirin, Warfarin, Clopidogrel or similar drugs
- You have a problem with bleeding
- You are allergic to local anaesthetic
- You have any other serious medical problems
- You are unwell on the day.

On arrival at the clinic

Please report to the reception desk. You will then be shown to the waiting area. Prior to the procedure the doctor will explain the treatment and you will be able to ask any questions that you may have about your treatment. When you are completely satisfied that you would like to go ahead and are sure that you fully understand what the procedure entails and the purpose of it, you will be asked to sign a form giving consent to your treatment.

How is an epidural performed?

There is no need to get undressed for this procedure, since we only need to see a small area of your neck or back. Please wear appropriate loose clothing.

You will be asked to lie face down on the X-ray table and to expose the appropriate area. This is sprayed with antiseptic (which feels very cold) prior to being injected with local anaesthetic to numb the area; this may sting a little. At this point a fine needle will be positioned (under X-ray guidance) to the correct area. Once the needle is in position, the injection is given. Often there is some discomfort at this point. It is important that you make us aware of this, so that we can give the injection over a longer period of time in order to reduce the discomfort as much as possible.

After your procedure

After the procedure, you will be taken to the recovery area, where you will be asked to rest for about 30 minutes. During this time, the nurse will assess you to ensure that you are ready to return home with your escort. Do not drive for 24 hours.

How will I feel?

For a few days after the treatment you may find that the pain is worse than before. This does not mean that the injection will not work, but is due to the procedure itself. You may notice some swelling around the area where the injection was inserted; this is to be expected and not to be worried about.

You may also experience some degree of numbness or weakness in your arms and fingers or legs and feet, or some pins and needles for a short time. This should quickly wear off. We normally suggest taking things gently during this time, and you should continue with your usual medications.

Where can I find further information?

Follow up arrangements will have been discussed with you prior to discharge from the clinic. If you have any questions or concerns about this procedure, please contact: **Clinical Nurse Specialist, Chronic Pain. Telephone 01273 242024 Ext. 2627.**

If you do not understand this leaflet, we can arrange for an interpreter.

إذا كنت لا تستطيع فهم محتويات هذه النشرة فبإمكاننا عمل الترتيبات لتوفير مترجم شفوي لك.

এই প্রচারপুস্তিকাটি যদি আপনি বুঝতে না পারেন, তবে আপনার জন্য আমরা একজন অনুবাদকের ব্যবস্থা করে দিতে পারি।

如你不明白本單張的內容，我們可安排口譯員服務。

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اگر مندرجات این جزوه را نمیفهمید، ما می‌توانیم مترجم در اختیارتان بگذاریم.

Jeśli masz trudności w zrozumieniu tej ulotki, możemy zorganizować tłumacza.

What happens next?

You might also want to contact **Backcare, The Charity for Healthier Backs** at www.backcare.org.uk



carer and patient information group approved