



east greenwich
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EPIDURAL STEROID INJECTION

WHAT IS IT?

An epidural steroid injection is an injection of local anesthetic and steroid deposited into the epidural space. The “epidural space” is the space between the spinal sac and the inside of the bony spinal canal. Once injected into this area, the medication moves freely up and down the spine to coat the nerve roots and the outside lining of the facet joints near the area of injection. The goal of an epidural injection is to provide pain relief by reducing the inflammation (swelling) of the nerve roots as they exit the spine. It will not correct the preexisting medical problem (i.e. spinal stenosis, herniated or bulging disc, arthritis, etc.) but may improve the level of pain.

WHAT ARE THE RESTRICTIONS?

This procedure cannot be performed if you have an active infection, flu, cold, fever, very high blood pressure, if you are pregnant, or on blood thinning medications.

HOW IS IT DONE?

You will be taken into the special procedure room where you will be positioned on your abdomen with a pillow under your hips and head. Non-invasive monitors will be applied to watch your blood pressure and pulse. The area of the injection will be cleansed with an iodine solution and a sterile drape will be applied to cover the area. The procedure will be performed under “fluoroscopy” which is an x-ray to show a TV image so that the doctor is sure that the medication goes to the correct site. The doctor will inject a local anesthetic into the skin to numb the surface area. Once this has taken effect a long needle will be inserted into the epidural space. The doctor will make sure it is in the desired location by taking fluoroscopic pictures. Next a small amount of dye will be introduced through the needle to insure needle placement. When it has been determined that the needle is in the desired location, the doctor will inject the medicine into the epidural space. He will ask you if you feel warmth or numbness into your legs. This indicates that the medicine is coating the nerve and in the right place. Once the procedure is completed your skin will be cleansed and a bandage applied. Your blood pressure and pulse will be checked and you will be able to leave once the doctor authorizes your discharge.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Risks of this procedure include bleeding, infection, nerve injury, dural puncture, pain and allergic reaction to the medicine. A full discussion of risks and benefits will be undertaken with your doctor prior to the procedure.

HOW WILL I FEEL AFTER THE PROCEDURE?

Two medications will be administered: a local anesthetic and a steroid. The local anesthetic lasts for about 6 hours. It usually makes people feel relief, but may cause temporary irritation, tingling, numbness, weakness, burning, coldness or heat, a wet feeling or other odd sensations. The steroid takes two days to two weeks to have its effect. You may not feel a change in your pain for some time and may feel worse before feeling better. You may be tender over the site of the injection.

The day of the test, that you do not eat or drink for 6 hours before your procedure. Please **DO** take your regular medications with small sips of water with the **EXCEPTION** of medications that thin your blood (Coumadin, Plavix, Ticlid or antiinflammatories such as Naprosyn, Motrin etc.) You may resume **ALL** your normal medicines the in the evening of your procedure. If you are tender over the site of the injection you may use an ice pack 3 to 4 times. **DO NOT** apply heat to the area the day of the injection. Please do **NOT** tub bath or soak in water (pool, jacuzzi, etc.) for the rest of the day.

Do minimal activity the rest of the day, if possible. The next day you may be up and around; 50% or normal exertion is appropriate. Two days after the procedure there are no limitations.

WHEN SHOULD I CALL EAST GREENWICH SPINE & SPORT?

If you experience a loss of control of your bladder or bowels, such as an inability to urinate by the evening of your procedure, call the number below. A low grade temperature can be caused by the steroid and is normal. A fever 48 hours after the injection or growing redness at the injection site is a sign of infection. Early unpleasant sensations and weakness can be normal, but persistent suffering or complete paralysis is not normal. Headaches can be caused by the steroid and may be expected. However, headaches that are severe when sitting up and worse when lying down, combined with nausea and vomiting need to be addressed.

We understand that having any procedure done can be scary. We can be reached 24 hours a day by calling 401-886-5907. **AFTER HOURS**, we can be paged through the answering service by calling the same number. **IN AN EMERGENCY, CALL 911.**