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INTERVENTIONAL PAIN SPECIALISTS

Epidural Steroid Injection

Epidural steroid injections are administered to relieve pain caused by pinched or inflamed nerve(s). These injections can be used for various types of pain, including joint pain, knee pain, back and neck pain. The injection of medication into the surrounding area helps to decrease swelling of the inflamed nerve(s).

Some common types of epidural steroid injections used to help reduce pain are thoracic epidural steroid injection, lumbar epidural steroid injection or cervical epidural steroid injection. Although uncommon, risks may include infection, allergic reaction to the medication, spinal headache, nerve damage, and prolonged increase in pain.

PREPARATION

To get ready for the injection, you will need to do the following:

• Tell your doctor the medications and herbal supplements you take, be sure to include aspirin and other over the counter medications. Ask whether you should stop taking any of your medications before the procedure. Refer to the medication form available at your clinic.

• Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or if you have any allergies, especially to medications, iodine or shellfish.

• If asked, bring x-rays, MRIs or other tests with you on the day of your treatment.

• For your protection, do not eat any food for at least 6 hours before your arrival time. You may drink clear liquids such as tea, black coffee, clear soda, clear juices (such as apple or cranberry) or water up to 2 hours before your arrival time but please do not drink any full liquids such as milk, orange or grapefruit juices.

The Day of the Procedure

The injection is performed in a hospital or outpatient surgery center.

• You may be examined by your physician and/or the nurses in the facility.

• You may be given an IV (intravenous) line for fluids or sedation medication.

THE PROCEDURE

In the Procedure Room:

• You will lie on an exam table on your stomach or side. It is important to stay as still as you can.

• The skin over the injection site will be cleaned with cold soap. This may or may not be the same area where your pain is located.

• The doctor will numb the skin with a local anesthetic.

• Fluoroscopy (x-ray imaging) will be used to help your doctor see where the injection needs to go. A contrast "dye" will be injected into the region to help obtain a better image.

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• An anesthetic to numb the region and/ or steroids (medications to reduce inflammation) will be injected into the space that surrounds the spinal cord.

POST PROCEDURE

After the Procedure

You can usually go home in about 30 minutes. You will need to have a responsible driver if you are planning to have sedation for the procedure. When the anesthetic wears off, you may feel more sore than usual - this is normal.

In most cases the steroids begin to work in 3 to 4 days. Ask your doctor when it is okay to return to work.

This injection may provide pain relief for weeks to months. In some cases, you may need more injections to get pain relief. Your doctor will advise you when to schedule a follow up appointment to discuss the results of your injection.