

# Cervical Epidural Steroid Injection

## HOW THE PROCEDURE IS PERFORMED

A cervical epidural steroid injection is usually done to treat pain from disk degeneration or herniation, scar tissue from prior surgery, or a vertebral body compression fracture. Occasionally, it is done to treat post herpetic neuralgia (post shingles pain). It is performed between the posterior spines of the spinal column in the neck at the location where your pain originates. A small needle is inserted at this location and advanced to the epidural space. A fluoroscopy (x-ray) machine is used during the procedure to ensure the needle is placed appropriately. Once the epidural space is identified, you are injected with a long-acting steroid and, in some cases, a local anesthetic agent to bathe the structures that are inflamed (disk and nerve roots) which should help to decrease your pain.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

An intravenous line may be started so you can receive intravenous fluids, medication to relax you, or to treat nausea or other problems. You may have some numbness around the area injected for a few hours. Once the local anesthetic has worn off, typically after several hours, your pain may return. Typically a long-acting steroid (NOT the kind that increases muscle size in athletes) is injected as well and will begin to work in about 24-36 hours to reduce inflammation. If your pain improves significantly, the injection is usually repeated when your pain starts to return. If you have no significant benefit with the first injection, another may be performed in 2-4 weeks time. If no substantial benefit is obtained after one or two injections, other alternatives may be discussed. If you develop any significant problems, please call immediately; if the problem is severe, go to the emergency room for evaluation.

## PRE-TEST INSTRUCTIONS

### IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU READ AND FOLLOW THESE DIRECTIONS

- ✚ You should wear comfortable clothing and low-heeled shoes
- ✚ You must have an adult with you to receive your post-procedure instructions and drive you home. If someone is not with you, your procedure may be cancelled. You will NOT be allowed to leave alone, and you will not be able to drive the remainder of the day.
- ✚ Your dietary restrictions are dependent upon the protocol of the facility where your procedure will be performed. Instructions will be provided at the time of scheduling.
- ✚ It may be necessary for you to have medical clearance before you can undergo this procedure. If you need clearance, you will need to make an appointment with your primary care physician or cardiologist before the procedure can be scheduled.
- ✚ Medications that thin your blood such as aspirin, Coumadin, anti-inflammatory medications, all vitamin, mineral, herbal supplements, and diet medications should be discontinued seven (7) days prior to your procedure.

**YOU MUST CONTACT THE PRESCRIBING PHYSICIAN BEFORE DISCONTINUING ASPIRIN OR COUMADIN TO BE SURE IT IS SAFE FOR YOU TO STOP TAKING THESE MEDICATIONS. DISCONTINUING THESE MEDICATIONS MAY PLACE YOU AT INCREASED RISK OF STROKE OR HEART ATTACK. PLEASE CONTACT YOUR PRESCRIBING PHYSICIAN.**

- ✚ Bring a list of your current medications with you the day of the procedure, including any over-the-counter medications. Be sure to include strength and dosage instructions.
- ✚ If you are a diabetic, you will be instructed by the facility how to take your medication or insulin.

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### SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

- ✦ Injected steroids occasionally cause euphoria or other emotional changes for a short while. They can temporarily stop your body from making steroids. While this is generally not a problem, if you have surgery within 3 weeks of the injection tell your doctor so that you can be given an extra steroid which will take care of any problems.
- ✦ If you are a diabetic, follow your sugars carefully for a few days as steroids can make your blood sugar rise.
- ✦ If you develop a headache, take your pain medication, drink plenty of fluids, especially caffeinated beverages, and call us if it does not get better after a few days.

**Anything more than a small amount of pain, bleeding, or swelling at the site of injection is unusual.**

**CONTACT THE OFFICE AT 502-897-6579 IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS.**

The information presented here is a summary of the procedure, focusing on the reason it is being done and its expected effects and potential complications. This summary is not intended to cover every conceivable risk of the procedure. For more information please check with the physician performing your procedure.