

Epidural Steroid Injection

An epidural steroid injection is an injection of anti-inflammatory steroid medication and a local anesthetic into the lower back to relieve pain in your legs or lower back. This is performed by inserting a specially designed needle under image guidance into an area of fatty tissue surrounding the spinal nerves called the epidural space. By reducing inflammation, the injection can help relieve your pain.

Before the procedure

For your safety, you will have to be off any **blood thinning medications** for a certain number of days before the procedure. However, **do not stop this medication without getting permission to do so from the physician who prescribed it.** You must do this before each procedure, as your medical situation can change over time.

- General guidelines are as follows:
 - For **Coumadin**, you will need to stop taking this for 5 days before having your procedure.
 - If you are on Coumadin, a PT/INR should be ordered by your primary care physician. You can have your blood work drawn on the day before your scheduled procedure and have the results faxed to us at 617-754-6463.
 - For **Plavix, Persantine, Aggrenox, Trental or Arixtra** you will need to stop taking them for 7 days before having your procedure.
 - For **Lovenox**, you will need to stop 48 hours before having your procedure.
 - For **Heparin**, you will need to stop 6 hours before having your procedure.
 - For **Ticlid**, you will need to stop 14 days before having your procedure.
 - For **Pradaxa (Dabigatran)**, you will need to stop 4 days before having your procedure.
- It is ok to continue taking Motrin and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs).
- Please continue to take **Aspirin** if it has been prescribed to you by a physician.
- Please notify us if you are allergic to Betadine, iodinated contrast material (CT scan dye), lidocaine, or steroids.
- Before we perform the injection, review of your MRI or CT scan is required.
 - If your imaging was performed outside of NEBH, **Please obtain a copy prior to your appointment and either:**
 - **Upload your images from home by visiting: nebh.org/ImageUpload**
 - **Or by bringing a copy with you the day of your procedure**
- We generally do not inject steroids in patients with active infections (viral, bacterial, etc.). **If you are taking antibiotics currently or have an active infection at this time, please notify us.**

Possible side effects

This is a very safe and commonly performed procedure. Rare complications include:

- Infection. Please contact us and/or your doctor if you have signs of infection including fever, chills, local redness, swelling or pain.
- Allergic reaction to the medication, skin cleansers, or contrast material.
- Bleeding
- Very rarely there may be an inadvertent puncture of the dural sac (the covering around the spinal fluid).

If you have any questions regarding possible side effects please ask the radiologist prior to the procedure.

After the procedure

- You may experience immediate relief of your symptoms (for about 4-6 hours) due to the local anesthetic. Your pain may return until the steroid starts to work which can take 3 days to 2 weeks.
- If you are diabetic and measure your blood sugar at home, you may find you have increased blood sugar for several days following the procedure. Please discuss this with the doctor treating your diabetes.
- Please have someone available to give you a ride home after your procedure. If a ride is not available, you will be need to remain in the department for a minimum of 20 minutes to assure you do not have temporary leg numbness or weakness.

If you have any questions, please call the Radiology Department at 617-754-5287, option 3.