



Fact Sheet – Epidural Injections

Introduction

An epidural steroid injection is an injection of a small dose of anti-inflammatory medication (corticosteroid) into the lower back to relieve pain in your legs or lower back. The medication is injected into the epidural space which is an area of fatty tissue surrounding the spinal nerves.

At Direct Radiology we perform epidural injections using CT guidance to very accurately place a thin needle in the epidural space at a specific level.

How do I prepare for a CT guided epidural injection?

Please bring to Direct Radiology any previous scans and reports (such as x-ray, CT and MRIs) as this will assist the radiologist performing the procedure.

(Note we accept referrals written on any request form even if it is for another radiology service).

There is no specific preparation required but because you will be lying on your stomach during the procedure and will be uncomfortable if your stomach is too full, it is advisable to limit food intake to a light meal only, up to 2 hours before the procedure.

When you make your appointment for the epidural injection, it is important to let Direct Radiology know if you are taking any blood thinning medication such as:

Aspirin, Coumadin® (warfarin), Plavix® (clopidogrel), Ticlid® (ticlopidine), heparin, Lovenox® (enoxaparin), Fragmin® (dalteparin),

Aggrenox® (dipyridamole), Effient® (prasugrel), Pradaxa® (dabigatran), or NSAIDS (such as ibuprofen, naproxen, nabumetone, diclofenac, etodolac, indomethacin, ketorolac, meloxicam, piroxicam, ketoprofen, oxaprozin), or any herbal blood thinning medications.

**** These medications can increase the risk of bleeding ****

We will liaise with your GP to stop any blood thinning medication.

We strongly recommend that you organize for a responsible person to drive you home on the day of the procedure.

What happens during an image guided lumbar epidural corticosteroid injection?

We will ensure that the process is as comfortable as possible. Our staff and radiologist will guide you each step of the way. You will be asked to wear a gown for the procedure. During the procedure you will be lying on your stomach on a bed that moves into the CT scanner. A series of planning scans will be done first. Antiseptic will then be used to clean your skin before local anaesthetic is given. This will cause some initial stinging but will quickly become numb.

A needle will then be placed into the epidural space using CT guidance and medication injected.

How long does the procedure take?

The whole procedure itself takes no more than 15 to 20 minutes.



What happens after an image guided lumbar epidural corticosteroid injection?

You may be monitored for up to 30mins before you are allowed to leave. You may feel some minor discomfort at the site of injection, temporary weakness, numbness or clumsiness in the lower limbs for up to an hour after.

- Do not drive or operate machinery for at least 24 hours after the procedure.
- Do not participate in strenuous activity that day.
- You may remove any bandages in the evening before going to bed.
- You may take a shower but do not take a bath or sit in a hot tub for 24 hours.
- If you are taking a blood thinning medication you may re-start it.
- If you have diabetes, your blood sugar numbers may increase. Your GP will counsel you regarding management

Direct Radiology will issue a report to your referring doctor.

What are the risks of an image guided lumbar epidural corticosteroid injection?

Risks of the below complications are rare and include:

- Infection
- Bleeding
- Nerve injury

Dural puncture – on the rare occasion that the needle punctures the membrane forming a sac containing fluid surrounding the spinal nerves, you may develop headache and the procedure will need to be abandoned and re-performed in 1-2 weeks time.

If you develop a fever, chills, increasing pain, or if you have new symptoms, please call your GP directly.

IMPORTANT

Please call Direct Radiology on (03) 9489 8884 if you have any questions as we are more than happy to assist.