
**THE CENTER FOR PAIN MEDICINE
MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL**

EPIDURAL STEROID INJECTION

Information Sheet for Patients

What is an epidural steroid injection? An epidural steroid injection can help relieve pain in the neck, arm, low back and leg (sciatica) caused by swelling and irritation of the spinal nerves. An epidural steroid injection involves bathing the irritated spinal nerves with steroid (anti-inflammatory medication) and a local anesthetic (numbing medication). During this treatment, medication is placed into the epidural space, where the spinal nerves exit the spine. If the pain is significantly improved after the injection, no further injection is usually needed. Pain relief may be very long-lasting. However, it is not unusual to need more than one injection to get pain relief and/or longer benefit.

What is the goal of epidural steroid injection? The goal is to provide pain relief so that you are able to resume normal activities. In many cases, we will prescribe a course of physical therapy to help you return to a normal level of activity.

What happens before treatment? You will be escorted to a room where a nurse will conduct a pre-procedure interview. The physician who will perform the injection will review your medical history, previous imaging studies, physical exam and current medications to help plan the best approach for the injection.

What happens during the treatment? The patient remains awake during the entire process. Blood pressure, heart rate and breathing are continually monitored. Lying face down on the procedure table the injection site is cleansed with an antiseptic. This procedure involves inserting a needle through the skin, muscle and soft tissues, so there is some discomfort involved. An injection of local anesthetic (numbing medication) will be administered in the area where you are experiencing pain. The physician then directs a needle with the use of x-ray guidance and deposits the medication. This procedure takes approximately 30 minutes.

