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

EPIDURAL STEROID INJECTION

Instruction Sheet for Patients

Should I limit my activity or change my diet after the injection? No. Unless your doctor tells you otherwise, you may return to your usual activities and resume your normal diet immediately after the injection.

Are there any side effects caused by epidural steroid injection? Side effects are uncommon following epidural steroid injection.

- **FOR DIABETIC PATIENTS:** It is important for you to know that if you have diabetes, the steroid can cause elevation in your blood sugar level for up to 2 weeks after the injection. If you have diabetes and regularly check your own blood sugar, you should check your blood sugar more often during the first several days after an epidural steroid injection. Please talk with the doctor who helps to manage your diabetes for instructions in how to change your diet and/or diabetes medication if your blood sugar is elevated.
- Immediately after the injection, you may feel that your pain is gone or is much less. This pain relief is often from the local anesthetic and will usually only last a few hours, followed by return of your usual pain. Pain relief from the steroid medication usually takes several days to appear.
- You may experience mild pain at the site of injection for several days. You may also experience a temporary increase in your usual pain after the injection. You can apply ice to the area for as long as 15 minutes, 3 – 4 times a day for localized pain.
- You may experience some dizziness during or soon after the injection and this is more common after injections in the neck.

Are there any restrictions after epidural steroid injection? Yes. You should follow these restrictions:

- Do not drive for the remainder of the day
- Do not take a tub bath or soak in water (i.e. pool, hot tub) for 24 hours after the procedure
- Please allow 3 days post-procedure before resuming physical therapy

What are the medications used for epidural steroid injection? Epidural steroid injections are done with a mixture of different medications given for specific reasons. The most common medications used are:

- Lidocaine or bupivacaine are local anesthetics which are used to numb the area of injection; this numbness usually wears off within 2 - 6 hours.

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- Triamcinolone (Kenalog) is a steroid which is used to treat inflammation and pain. The effects of this steroid may take up to 10 days to appear.
- Iopamidol, an x-ray contrast agent, is injected into the area to confirm correct placement of the epidural steroid.

When should I call my doctor? You should call us immediately if any of the following occur:

- If you experience any swelling, redness, bleeding or discharge from the site of the injection
- If you have a fever greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit
- If you experience new or worsening back or neck pain
- If you experience a new numbness or weakness in your arms or legs
- If you experience new difficulty with urination after the injection, like difficulty urinating or suddenly losing control of your bladder
- If you experience new difficulty with your bowel movements after the injection, like suddenly losing control of your bowels
- If you develop a new headache after the procedure

How can I reach a doctor from the Center? There is a doctor on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week who can be reached as follows:

- DURING OFFICE HOURS (Monday thru Friday, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm) please call (617) 726-8810 and leave a message for the physician on the nurses' line
- AFTER HOURS AND ON WEEKENDS, please call (617-726-2000) and ask the hospital operator to page the physician on call for the MGH Pain Service
- IF FOR ANY REASON YOU ARE UNABLE TO REACH A PHYSICIAN FROM OUR CENTER and you are having any of the problems listed above, please go to the nearest Emergency Room and show them this document