



## **Epidural Steroid Injections**

### **What is an epidural steroid injection?**

Epidural steroids have been used for more than 35 years. It is a procedure that consists of injecting a small volume of corticosteroid medication into the spinal canal at the level of the neck or back where the nerve is being pinched. Your surgeon may recommend an epidural steroid injection as a treatment to relieve pain or to help confirm the nerve that is causing pain.

### **How does an epidural steroid injection work?**

An epidural steroid provides a dose of steroid at the inflamed nerve root or where there is nerve irritation. The steroid acts to block the inflammatory reaction of the nerve when there is a disc herniation or tear, or compression from arthritis of the spine.

### **How effective are epidural steroids?**

Your response to an epidural steroid injection and the success in relieving your pain will vary with your diagnosis, the duration of your symptoms, your history of prior surgical intervention, your age and the location of the problem. In most patients, the pain is significantly better and there is a significant improvement in their overall function and level of activity.

### **Are there any risks to epidural steroid injections?**

An epidural steroid injection is essentially a minimally invasive surgical procedure and there is always a small risk of bleeding or infection with any type of procedure. Possible side effects from the epidural injection may be transient flushing from the injection, headache, soreness from the needle placement, mild fluid retention, or an elevation of your blood sugar if you are diabetic.

### **What should I do before an epidural steroid injection?**

You may take all of your usual medications with the exception of blood thinners including aspirin products prior to the procedure with sips of water. If you are on any blood thinner or aspirin product, this medication should be discontinued. The discontinuation of your medication should be anticipated in consultation with your physician. Do not eat four hours prior to the procedure.

### **What should I expect when I have an epidural steroid injection?**

You will meet with the physician prior to your epidural steroid injection and a brief history and physical will be obtained. You will be asked to sign for consent to the performed procedure at that time. During the procedure the skin will be cleansed with a special soap and numbed with a local anesthetic prior to performing the epidural steroid injection. The entire procedure usually takes ten to fifteen minutes.

### **What should I expect after the procedure?**

After the injection, you will be monitored for 30 minutes and then discharged to follow up with your surgeon. You should arrange to have someone drive you home. After the procedure, you may have some soreness from the needle injection, which may last for up to 48 to 72 hours. Occasionally, you will have a transient increase in your previous symptoms as the steroid takes approximately 48 to 72 hours to begin to have its effect. You may resume all your previous medications and remove the bandage that evening. You will be able to resume your usual activity the following day.