

Pain Management Service

Lumbar epidural injection

What is an epidural injection?

A lumbar epidural injection is given into the space around your spinal cord in your lower back (lumber spine). It is usually given to help reduce sciatica (leg pain) caused by irritation of inflammation of the nerves in the lumbar spine.

A mixture of local anaesthetic and steroid is injected. These medicines help reduce inflammation (the body's response to irritation) and may improve your pain.

Benefits

A lumbar epidural injection can help relieve leg pain caused by inflammation in the spine.

Risks

No procedure is risk free.

Common side-effects may include:

- Temporary discomfort at the injection site
- Infection
- Bruising
- Allergic reaction to the medicines used



Patient Information

Less common side-effects include:

- Headaches
- Leg weakness
- Numbness in the legs

Very rare side-effects include:

- Nerve damage
- Spinal cord damage
- Serious infection

These rare cases can lead to permanent neurological problems, including paraplegia (loss of movement or feeling in the lower body).

Before the procedure

- You will have the treatment as a day case.
- You will be receive an appointment to attend the surgical day unit at University Hospital Coventry & Warwickshire (Walsgrave) or at the Hospital of St Cross (Rugby).
- Arrange for someone to drive you home after the procedure.
- You may be in the unit for 2 to 4 hours.
- Bring a list of your current medicines.
- If you take blood-thinning medicines such as warfarin or clopidogrel, tell your doctor. These may need to be temporarily stopped.
 - If you take warfarin, you will need a blood test on the day to make sure your blood is clotting normally.
- You will be asked to change into a hospital gown. You may keep your underwear on.
- Your doctor will explain the procedure and ask you to sign a consent form.
- The procedure may involve X-rays. If you are a female, you will be asked about your last menstrual period. If there is any chance you may be pregnant, tell the doctor or nurse.

Patient Information

The procedure

- The procedure may be carried out under x-ray guidance, which helps the doctor guide the needle to the correct area.
- You will lie in the correct position, and your back will be cleaned with antiseptic solution, which may feel cold.
- A local anaesthetic is injected into the skin. This may sting briefly before it goes numb.
- It is important to keep still while the epidural needle is carefully guided into position. You may feel some pressure or discomfort.
- If X-ray is used, a contrast dye may be injected so the area shows clearly on the screen.
- The local anaesthetic and steroid are then injected into the epidural space. You may feel tightness or pressure.
- A small dressing will be applied. You can remove this later the same day.

After the procedure

- You will be taken to a recovery area.
- You will lie flat for a short time and nursing staff will help you sit up.
- Nursing staff will observe you before you go home.
- Take care when standing up and make sure you feel steady.
- Take your regular medicines and pain killers as normal.
- You may have increased discomfort before the pain relief starts.
- Rarely, you may get severe headache.
- You may need stronger painkillers during this period. If your usual medicines do not help, speak to your GP.
- A letter will be sent to your GP, and you will receive a follow-up appointment at the pain clinic.

Please make sure someone drives you home after this procedure.

Patient Information

More information

This leaflet does not replace advice from your doctor. If you have any questions, please speak to your doctor before signing the consent form.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact the pain management secretaries on 024 7696 5880 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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