



## Epidural Steroid Injections (ESIs)

### What is an Epidural Steroid Injection (ESI)?

An Epidural Steroid Injection is an injection of steroid medication into the epidural space.

### What is the epidural space?

The epidural space is the area next to the spinal cord and the bony vertebral canal.

### Who can benefit from ESIs?

Patients with back pain, neck pain, arm or leg pains may benefit from ESIs. A few common examples of problems which can be helped are:

- Sciatica
- Pain following spinal surgery
- Compression fractures (collapsed bones)
- Herniated discs
- Spinal stenosis (narrowing of the spinal canal associated with aging).

### How do ESIs help?

Steroids are potent anti-inflammatory medicines which can decrease swelling and pain. Because the medications are delivered to the site of pain, smaller doses can be given,

generally with more relief than medicines given by mouth.

### How often can these injections be given?

Your doctor will determine how many injections should be given, however, 5 to 6 injections can usually be given per year. Your relief from each injection will determine how many injections can be given.

### What are the possible side effects?

As with any procedure, a small number of patients may experience side effects which will be explained in more detail by your doctor. A few potential side effects are listed below, however, the vast majority of patients experience no side effects at all.

- Headache
- Bleeding
- Infection
- Nerve damage
- Lack of relief
- Localized pain at the injection site

### What if I am a diabetic?

Your blood sugars may be increased for a few days following the injection and may require closer monitoring.

### What if I am taking blood thinning medications? (Eg., Coumadin, Plavix, Ticlid, Aggrenox):

Coumadin must be stopped 5 days before your procedure and you must have some laboratory studies taken immediately before your procedure (Eg., PT, INR). Your doctor may ask you to stop other medications before your procedure as well.

### Does the injection hurt?

The area is numbed with local anesthetic before the injection, thus most patients experience only moderate discomfort.

### Will I have any restrictions?

You should take it easy on the day of an injection. Driving is generally not permitted on the day of a procedure. Otherwise no restrictions are present.