

What Is an Epidural Injection

It is the injection of local anaesthetic and/or anti-inflammatory steroid into the spinal canal. The needle is placed in the space around the sac containing the spinal nerve roots. This is performed to treat pain caused by narrowing of the spinal canal, inflammation in this space or disc disease.

The local anaesthetic works relatively quickly, however the anti-inflammatory effects of the steroid helps to reduce pain over a longer period of time. Most commonly, the effects are temporary over weeks and months, but could result in permanent remission. A positive result helps confirm the diagnosis, and can help your doctor consider other definitive treatments.

What Happens Before the Procedure

You need to **fast from solids and liquids for 4 hours** before the procedure.

If you take **Warfarin, Plavix, Iscover, Clopidogrel** or other blood thinning agents, notify the booking staff as this may require cessation or blood tests prior to the procedure.

A nurse will go through a checklist with you prior to the procedure. Questions relating to allergies, past medical history and your understanding of the procedure will be discussed.

Notify the nurse and doctor of any:

- Allergies, especially iodine as the contrast medium may cause a reaction.
- If you are or may be pregnant, due to the use of x-ray imaging.

Do not be alarmed if questions are repeated, this is to ensure a thorough check is undergone. A doctor will sign a consent form with you either in the pre admission clinic or on the day of the procedure. Please take this time to ask any questions regarding the procedure or concerns with the doctors. The doctor will discuss with you the details of the procedure and potential complications.

What Happens During the Procedure

- The procedure takes approximately 30 minutes.
- You will be required to lie on your stomach, whereby an antiseptic solution will be used to clean the area of your back where the needle will enter.
- Local anaesthetic will be applied to the skin entry site, you may experience temporary stinging.
- A needle is then directed into the spinal epidural space using x-ray or CT imaging.
- The position of the needle tip is then checked using an injection of contrast.
- The local anaesthetic and/or steroid is injected.
- The needle is removed and a small dressing applied.

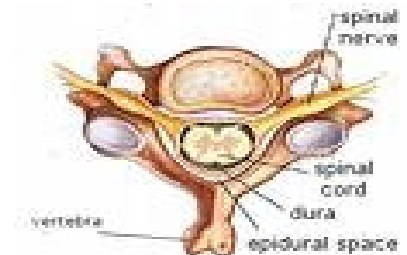
What Happens After the Injection

Due to an injection of local anaesthetic, you may get numbness in the leg, making it difficult for you to walk comfortably for a few hours. Usually this sensation is present immediately and if it has not developed after half an hour then it will not develop at all. You will need to rest until normal sensation returns.

You are not able to drive yourself home so, please organise a driver to bring you to and from the procedure.

At times pain relief may be immediate and then wear off temporarily. Relief from pain often develops over a period of days.

The day after your procedure the pain may be transiently worse, requiring you to increase your tablet medication whilst the effects of the injection develop.



Risks

Complications are rare during this procedure. However you need to be informed of all the risks.

Risks associated with the procedure include:

- Pain or discomfort at the needle insertion site, bleeding at the site or into deeper tissues.
- Risks associated with the x-ray contrast medium, including nausea, rash, itchiness and swelling. If you experience any of these symptoms please inform your nurse or doctor. Very severe reaction is rare and a life threatening reaction is extremely rare.
- You may experience headache after your procedure. Headache can occur in less than 1% of uncomplicated Epidural Injections. If headache persists for more than 2 days, please contact your doctor or NIISwa.
- Infection involving redness, swelling or increased pain over the injection site. Chills or fever, which should be reported immediately to your referring doctor.
- Occasionally, during the needle placement in the epidural space, the sac containing the spinal nerve roots will be punctured. If the sac is punctured, you may develop a headache as there is potential for fluid to slowly leak out. You will be alerted by the radiologist performing the procedure, and be instructed to lay flat for 4 hours and to drink plenty of fluid to help prevent the headache.
- Any procedure potentially can be associated with unpredictable risks including death.
- The procedure may not help your pain and you will need to discuss with your doctor other options.

Seek Medical Advice if you have:

- Persistent headache.
- Prolonged nausea and vomiting.
- Weakness or loss of strength in your lower limbs.

Any Concerns contact:

- Your specialist or GP
- NIISwa:
Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital
(08) 9346 4455
Royal Perth Hospital
(08) 9224 1069
- Or the Emergency Department via switchboard on:
Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital
(08) 9346 3333
Royal Perth Hospital
(08) 9224 2244

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NEUROLOGICAL INTERVENTION & IMAGING SERVICES WA (NIISwa)

PATIENT INFORMATION

EPIDURAL INJECTION



NIISWA – Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital
1st Floor G Block (access via Gold Lifts)
Phone (08) 9346 4455

NIISWA – Royal Perth Hospital
3rd Floor Imaging Services North Block
Phone (08) 9224 1069