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www.painawayjax.com

Epidural Steroid Injection Information

You have the right, as a patient, to be informed about your condition and the recommended surgical, medical or diagnostic procedures to be used so that you may make the decision whether or not to undergo the procedure after knowing the potential risks, complications and possible benefits involved.

What is an Epidural Steroid Injection?

Many people with pain such as yours have swelling near the nerves that exit from the spinal column. This swelling can result from many things and may include arthritis of the spinal joints, a “leaky”, protruding or herniated intervertebral disc or scar tissue from previous operations. As the swelling pushes on the nerves coming from the spine, this may cause pain such as yours to occur. The purpose of this injection is to place a very potent anti-swelling medicine (Corticosteroid) VERY close to where the swelling appears to be. This may or may not be where you feel most of your pain, but this is where the nerves that carry the pain may come from. There are obviously **NO GUARANTEES** that this injection, or any other type of treatment, will relieve your pain. Generally, many people with pain such as yours have a marked reduction or elimination of their pain following one or more of these injections. Some people who have a reduction, but not elimination of their pain may benefit from further injections after about 5 to 14 days. Some people, however, may not receive any benefit from an injection such as this. The procedure is not a cure but a very effective way to ease your pain and suffering and reduce the dependence on medications.

What are the risks to Epidural Steroid Injections?

Just as there may be risks and hazards in continuing in your present condition without treatment, there are also risks and hazards related to the performance of any epidural steroid injection. The most common risk associated with this procedure is that the needle used to deliver the steroids could puncture the sac containing the spinal fluid (the dura). If this should happen during your procedure, you might experience a headache afterwards. There are treatments available to treat this headache if you so desire. There are other **VERY RARE** complications that have been reported to be associated with this procedure that



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you should be informed exist. These include, but are not limited to, retention of salt and water, transient disturbances of blood sugar, infection along the needle tract, abscess (pus) or blood (hemorrhage) in the epidural space, scar formation about the spinal nerves (adhesive arachnoiditis), allergic reaction(s) to the medications used, nerve damage or injury possibly leading to loss of feeling and/or paralysis of bowel, bladder, and/or sexual organs, avascular necrosis, and even death.

What can you expect during the procedure?

You should expect to be at the office for at least an hour, however the actual procedure really only takes a few minutes.

You will be checked in and have your history reviewed. You will be placed on the procedure table and made to feel as comfortable as possible. Monitors such as blood pressure cuff and EKG will be applied.

Your back will be cleaned off with special soap to avoid infections and a sterile drape will be applied.

When Dr. Willens is ready to begin, he will use a special X-Ray machine (Fluoroscope) to find the exact spot to begin. He will let you know everything he will do *before* he does it.

In general, you will feel a “pinch and burn” for approximately one second while he numbs up the skin. This is generally the most uncomfortable part and lasts just a moment.

He will then find the precise place to administer the medication using the Fluoroscope. Once he finds the exact spot, he will generally administer some contrast to confirm placement.

Following confirmation, he will administer the medication. This too can sometimes be uncomfortable as there is a large amount of medication going into a small space. Sometimes, you may have sensations going down one or both of your legs. This is actually a good sign and means the medicine is going to the proper place.



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What can you expect after the procedure?

You will have a bandage applied and will be discharged home 30-60 minutes after the procedure. You will need someone to drive you home for safety reasons. You are restricted from driving any automobile or motorized/mechanized vehicle that day or from operating heavy machinery/equipment of any type that day. You should not lift anything heavier than 5 pounds or do any type of strenuous work that day. It is possible for your pain to be increased for 24-48 hours after the procedure. As the medication begins to work, you hopefully will find that your pain begins to decrease. You may remove the bandage the following day.

When should I call the office?

In general, during office hours please call the office first. If after hours, **call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.**

Call if you have a fever or chills or redness or drainage at the treatment site as there could be a serious infection.

If there is increased or increasing weakness that was not present before the injection, seek immediate medical attention.

If you have a headache that is worse while sitting up and standing, and better while lying down, this is a treatable condition.

If you have any concerns or questions, contact us immediately.