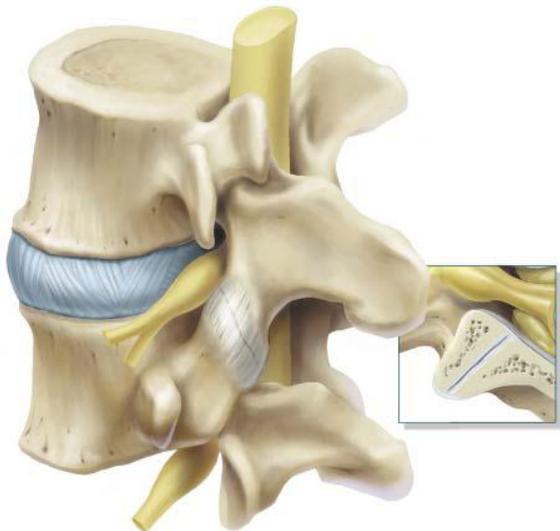


Nerve Root block/Epidural

PATIENT INFORMATION SHEET



This is the name given to an injection given close to a nerve as it leaves your spine. It is used for patients who suffer from pain from a “pinched nerve”, also known as radicular pain.

This may involve the arms, neck, body and legs. In the legs it is known as sciatica.

Why are you getting it?

When a nerve root becomes compressed and inflamed, it can produce back and/or leg pain. Some people do get pain with this nerve irritation and some don't. Those who have the pain could get relief with injections of steroids around the nerve root that we think is being irritated, the only way of finding out if this is the case for you is by trying it.

Medications injected include:

Cortisone (Celestone) – a strong long lasting anti-inflammatory.

The cortisone injection itself will last 4-12 weeks, but with appropriate rehabilitation the effect can be much longer.

At Rehab+Fitness we mix cortisone with a local anesthetic drug (usually Bupivacaine) which gives relief within 5 minutes and lasts 6-8 hours.

Technique

Spinal injection procedures are completed with you lying face down in a CT scanner.

The doctor will then clean your skin with an antiseptic wash

A fine needle is then passed through the skin and tissues, constantly manipulated under CT guidance until it contacts the intended nerve.

When gentle needle contact is made with the nerve you may experience a brief pain that many patients describe as an “electrical, nerve-like shooting” pain.

This pain will usually be in the same area of the body and/or character as the pain that you have come in to have treated. This is common, confirms the correct position of the needle and is normal part of the procedure.

At this point, the cortisone and local anaesthetic are injected.

Preparation

- It is essential that we know in advance of any **blood thinning medication**.
- We also strongly recommend that you bring a responsible person to drive you home afterwards.

Risks & side effects:

There is a possibility of side effects with just about any medical procedure and you should always discuss that possibility with your doctor before undergoing any treatment.

Risks of spinal procedures are uncommon and include:

- Pain at the injection site,
- bleeding,
- infection: most of these are minor
- Nerve damage: from direct needle trauma.
- Dural Puncture: this is when the needle penetrates into the sac encasing the nerves within the spinal canal, causing leakage of fluid contained within the sac, known as CSF (cerebrospinal fluid). The risk of this procedure is approximately 1% and is treated with flat bed rest for four hours (*In three years we have only had this happen once*).
- worsening of the pain symptoms.

Side effects of the steroid medications used may include:

- fluid retention,
- elevated blood pressure,
- Mood swings and insomnia.
- Increased blood sugar in diabetics

These steroid side effects are usually temporary.

Important information to tell your doctor prior to treatment

Serious side effects are rare, however if you have an existing condition, this must be discussed with your referring doctor before having treatment.

Following the procedure

At most, you will feel some minor discomfort in the back. As local anaesthetic has been injected into the spine most patients will be pain free.

Following the injection you will often feel numbness and tingling in the distribution of the nerve. Usually pain is very effectively relieved during the first few hours while the anesthetic is working. It is not unusual for the pain to return after this.

It may take several days for the steroids to work and sometimes this may be minimally effective. Some people get no benefit.

You should not drive for the rest of the day. The following day you may return to work and gradually increase your activities.

Follow up/Rehab

Please ensure that you make a follow up appointment with our office to discuss the result of your procedure.

If you have severe pain, temperatures and /or redness and swelling in the region you were injected then please contact the rooms immediately.

Begin physio/exercise the following day within sensible limits.