



Lumbar/Caudal Epidural Steroid Injection

What is the epidural/caudal space? - The membrane that covers the spinal cord and nerve roots in the spine is called the dura membrane. The space surrounding the dura is the epidural space. When the epidural space is in the region of the tailbone, it is called the caudal space. Nerves travel through the epidural/caudal space to the back and into the legs. Inflammation of these nerve roots may cause pain in these regions due to irritation from a damaged disc or from contact in some way with the bony structure of the spine.

What is an epidural steroid injection and why is it helpful? - An epidural steroid injection places anti-inflammatory medicine into the epidural/caudal space to decrease inflammation of the nerve roots, in the hopes of reducing pain in the back or legs. The epidural/caudal injection may help the injury to heal by reducing inflammation. It may provide permanent relief or provide a period of pain relief for several months while the injury/cause of pain is healing.

General Pre-Injection Instructions – Be sure to tell your doctor if you have any allergies, particularly to iodine, topical or intravenous. If you are not receiving sedation, you may eat a light meal a few hours before the procedure. If you are an insulin-dependent diabetic, you must not change your normal eating pattern prior to the procedure. You may take your routine medications (i.e., high blood pressure and diabetic medications, e.g. Glucophage). However, you will need to take only half of your usual dose of insulin the day of the procedure. You should continue to take pain medications the day of your procedure. If you are on a blood thinner (Coumadin, Plavix, Lovenox, etc.), you must notify your physician's office so timing the discontinuation of these medications can be explained. **A driver must accompany the patient and be responsible for getting him/her home.**

What happens during the procedure? - You are positioned in such a way that the physician can best visualize the low back or the buttocks. The doctor may or may not decide to use an x-ray. The skin on the back or buttocks is scrubbed using antibacterial soap. Next, the physician numbs a small area of skin with numbing medicine. This medicine stings for several seconds. After the numbing medicine has been given time to be effective, the physician directs a needle into the epidural/caudal space. The physician may decide to insert a temporary catheter (a tube) to direct medication to a particular area. A mixture of numbing medicine (local anesthetic) and anti-inflammatory (steroid) is injected. The catheter is then removed along with the needle.

The physician will use an x-ray machine during this procedure. If you are pregnant, it is important to inform your physician.

What happens after the procedure? – There are no restrictions to food or liquid intake or to activity level unless specified by your doctor. A follow-up appointment will be made for a repeat block if indicated. These injections are usually done in a series of three (3), about 2-4 weeks apart. The back or legs may occasionally feel weak or numb for a few hours.

No driving is allowed on the day of the procedure. You must bring someone to drive you home after the procedure.