



## **Cervical/Lumbosacral Selective Epidural Injection** **(Transforaminal ESI)**

**What is the epidural space and why is a selective epidural helpful?** - 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. Nerves travel through the epidural space before they form the nerves that travel down the arms, along the ribs and into the legs. The nerves leave the spine from small bony openings called foramen. Inflammation of these nerve roots may cause pain in the arms, chest or legs. These nerve roots may become inflamed and painful due to irritation, such as from a damaged disc or a bony spur.

Selective epidural injection (therapeutic nerve root block) places anti-inflammatory medicine over the root and into the epidural space to decrease inflammation of the nerve roots, therefore reducing the pain. 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** – Please tell your doctor if you have any allergies, particularly to contrast dye or iodine, topical or intravenous. You may eat a light meal 6 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 hold your pain medications or anti-inflammatory 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 the timing of 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?** - An IV may or may not be started at your doctor's discretion. You are placed on an x-ray table and positioned in such a way that the physician can best visualize the bony openings in the spine where the nerve roots exit the spine using x-ray guidance. The skin in the appropriate area 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 very small needle using x-ray guidance above the nerve root as it leaves the foramen. A small amount of contrast (dye) is injected to ensure proper needle positioning. Then, a small mixture of numbing medicine (local anesthetic) and anti-inflammatory (steroid) is injected.

**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 as to food or liquid intake or to the 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 arms/legs may feel weak or numb for a few hours. Your pain may worsen. These side effects are to be expected, but they do not always happen.

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