



SEATTLE SPINE & SPORTS MEDICINE

TREATING NERVE ROOT PAIN WITH EPIDURAL INJECTIONS

When the nerves that exit the spine get compressed or irritated—for example from a disc herniation—numbness, tingling, pain and muscle weakness can result. When this occurs in the lower back, patients experience **sciatica**—back pain radiating into the leg with neurologic symptoms.

WHAT IS AN EPIDURAL FOR NERVE ROOT PAIN?

- Epidural injections place medication around the irritated nerves.
- While most people think of epidurals for pregnancy, this procedure can be an effective treatment to reduce nerve root pain.

WHAT SHOULD YOU EXPECT DURING THE PROCEDURE?

- The skin and underlying tissue is numbed with an injection of local anesthetic (Lidocaine).
- Using moving x-ray image guidance (fluoroscopy), a larger needle is placed in a safe area just adjacent to the irritated nerve.
- A small amount of contrast dye is injected to assure correct placement. Then a small volume of corticosteroid (cortisone) plus local anesthetic is injected right near the nerve to maximize the benefit of treatment.
- The procedure takes approximately 30 minutes to perform and after the procedure, you may remain at the clinic another 15-30 minutes.
- If you feel anxious about the procedure, we can provide oral medication to be taken before the procedure, with driving and other restrictions.



HOW SHOULD YOU PREPARE?

- Talk to our providers about medications and supplements you usually take.
- If you take blood thinners, ask for special instructions to stop them before the procedure.
- We do not recommend this procedure for patients who are pregnant.

WHAT SHOULD YOU EXPECT AFTER THE PROCEDURE?

- The injected anesthetic will last 3-12 hours. You may have some numbness, tingling, or weakness during this time.
- The cortisone may take a few days to begin working.
- Avoid heavy lifting and other activities that can stress your lower back for one or two days after the procedure.
- Restart all prescribed medications, including those you stopped because of the procedure.
- Carefully monitor your symptoms. Tell your provider at your follow-up appointment.

WILL THIS PROCEDURE GIVE LONG-TERM RELIEF

- An epidural eases pain like water douses a camp fire. While many patients respond to a single treatment, others find that two or three treatments several weeks apart provide more relief.
- Epidurals can help relieve nerve irritation so the body naturally heals. They may also provide enough relief so that you can progress in other treatments such as an exercise or spinal mobilization program.

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