

Epidural/Caudal injection information

Why am I having an epidural injection?

The epidural space is located within your backbone. Nerves travel through this space before they branch out to different areas of your body. Irritation of these nerves may cause pain in the immediate area or referred pain in other areas. Depending on which nerves are affected this may occur in your neck, chest, back, hip, buttocks or legs. By giving you this injection the doctor will be able to tell whether or not this is the source of your pain. In addition you may experience a prolonged period of pain relief.

What is an epidural injection?

The procedure involves an injection of a local anaesthetic (a numbing medicine) and an anti-inflammatory drug (steroid) into the epidural space to help stop nerve root inflammation. This is carried out under local anaesthetic and sometimes using X-ray. During the procedure you may experience a temporary recurrence of your normal pain. This is a good sign as it means the doctor is injecting medication into precisely the correct place.

What will I be able to do afterwards?

After 60-90 minutes you should be able to walk and can be discharged after 2 hours. Before you go we will ask you to describe your pain on a scale of 0-10. On occasion your legs may feel temporarily numb or weak for a few hours and this is why you should have someone with you. Do not walk without assistance if this happens. You may experience some muscle ache around the injection site for a few days, and once the local anaesthetic wears off it can be five days before you obtain pain relief from the anti-inflammatory drug. Do not drive or drink alcohol for twenty-four hours after the procedure. You may resume your normal level of activity the following day and should be able to return to work. Your doctor may send you for physiotherapy and if this is the case then you should have an appointment for some time in the two weeks following your procedure. If this was discussed with you and you do not have an appointment please inform us.

It is important to realise that any relief obtained from this procedure should be used to gradually increase your activity levels. It is also important to realise that your own daily exercise programme is for life and stopping it will usually cause the pain and stiffness to return.

Will I experience any side effects?

You may experience the following symptoms: -

- Pain
- Headache
- Infection
- Inability to pass urine

- Dizziness especially with neck injections
- Side effects from the anti-inflammatory are very uncommon and include temporary skin flushing

Are there any risks involved in epidural injection?

There is an element of risk involved in all the procedures and treatments that you may have at the pain clinic. However you should remember that these risks are usually minimal. Your doctor will discuss these fully before your procedure and will be happy to answer all your questions.

Who should I contact if I have any problems following treatment?

You can contact the Pain Clinic on between 9-2pm, Monday to Friday. Outwith these hours you should contact your own GP or NHS 24. Before you leave we will give you a letter for your GP which you should hand in to your surgery a couple of days after your treatment.

NB If you experience numbness or weakness in your legs, increasing back pain or are having difficulty passing urine after you are discharged home you should attend the hospital Accident and Emergency Department promptly.

Please bring your GP's letter with you and show it to the doctor so that he/she will know what treatment you have had.