

Epidural Steroid Injection Information

Your physician has requested that you receive an epidural steroid injection (ESI). These injections are intended to decrease pain and, in some cases, to help identify the origin of your pain.

A steroid (i.e. “cortisone”), which is a powerful anti-inflammatory, is injected at or near the spinal site that is believed to be the origin of your pain. The primary effect of this medication is to decrease inflammation near the site of the injection. It usually takes 3-7 days for the steroid to begin working and for your pain to decrease.

ESI's often provide long-term relief (many months) but occasionally only last days to weeks. The amount of pain relief you will experience depends on the type and severity of your condition, as well as your own body's general responsiveness to steroids. At times, some people won't get any pain relief after an ESI, but this is uncommon.

ESI's are very safe but they do have inherent risks, including:

1. Headaches – About 1% of people who receive an *interlaminar* ESI can develop a “spinal” or “post dural puncture” headache. Such a headache is generally not serious, usually resolves spontaneously and if persistent can be treated effectively with a different type of epidural injection.
2. Pain – Patients can occasionally experience some mild to moderate discomfort in the area of the injection for up to 3 days. This is from the injection procedure itself and is uncommon. In rare instances, ESI's can exacerbate preexisting pain or create new pain, although this is typically short-lived.
3. Elevated Blood Sugars – Diabetics may experience elevated blood sugars (over 200+) for a few days after an ESI. Adequate monitoring and treatment should be maintained.
4. Bleeding – Bleeding into the epidural space after an injection is very rare but is serious. This is much more likely to occur in patients who are taking **blood thinners** (i.e. **aspirin, fish oil, Coumadin, Plavix, etc.**) or have bleeding disorders such as **coagulopathies** or **low platelet counts**. Prior to getting an ESI, all blood thinning medications must be temporarily discontinued (in most cases for 7 days) **under the supervision of the prescribing physician** and bleeding disorders must be corrected (commonly with transfusions). We can provide you with a comprehensive list of blood thinning medications if you would like to review it. **Please inform the nurse before your injection if any of the above applies to you.**
5. Adverse Drug Reactions – Such reactions are very rare but can be serious. **Please inform the nurse before your injection of any drug allergies you have or if you have an allergy to iodine or seafood.**
6. Nerve injury, spinal cord injury and spinal infection – Such complications are very rare but can be serious. **Please inform the nurse before your injection if you have an active infection, fever or are taking antibiotics.**

EPIDURAL INJECTION INFORMATION

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