

## THORACIC INTERLAMINER EPIDURAL STEROID INJECTION

*for upper and middle back pain*

### **What is a thoracic interlaminar epidural steroid injection ?**

A thoracic interlaminar epidural steroid injection is an outpatient procedure for treating upper and middle back pain.

### **What is the epidural space?**

The spinal cord and its nerves are protected by a covering called dura. The space around the dura is called the epidural space and in the upper back it is called the thoracic epidural space.

### **What causes the pain in the epidural space?**

The thoracic area of the spine has 12 bones called the vertebrae. There are soft discs between these vertebrae that cushion, hold them together and control the motion.

If a disc tears, chemicals inside can leak and this can inflame the nerve roots and cause the pain.

If a large disc tears, this can cause the disc to bulge, inflame the nerve roots and cause the pain. Osteophytes, which are bone spurs, can press against nerve roots and cause pain.

### **How do I know if I have disc and nerve root pain?**

If there is pain in upper back when you move, this can be thoracic disc and dural inflammation. If the pain travels to the front of your chest when you move your upper or mid back, you may have nerve root inflammation.

Common tests such as MRI's can show disc bulges and nerve root compression, but may not show a torn or leaking disc. A thoracic epidural injection can provide relief if disc problems, dural, or nerve root inflammation are causing the pain.

### **What is a thoracic interlaminar epidural steroid injection?**

With a thoracic epidural steroid injection, a corticosteroid (anti-inflammatory medicine) is injected into the epidural space to reduce inflammation. A local anesthetic may also be used. The easiest way to do this is from the back of the spine which is also called an interlaminar injection.

### **What happens during injection?**

A local anesthetic will be used to numb your skin. The doctor will then insert a thin needle directly into the epidural space. Fluoroscopy, a type of x-ray, must be used to ensure the safe and proper position of the needle. A dye may also be injected to make sure the needle is at the correct spot. When the doctor is sure the needle is at the correct place, the medicine will be injected.

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### **What happens after an injection?**

You will be monitored for up to 30 minutes after an injection. When you are ready to leave, the staff will give you discharge instructions. You will also be given a pain diary. It is important to fill this out because it helps your doctor know how the injection is working.

It may help to move your upper and mid back in ways that hurt before the injection to see if the pain is still there but do not overdo it. Take it easy for the rest of the day.

You may feel immediate pain relief and numbness in upper and mid back for a period of time after the injection. This may indicate the medication has reached the right spot.

Your pain may return after this short pain-free period, or may even be a little worse for a day or two. It may be caused by needle irritation or by the corticosteroid itself. Corticosteroids usually take two or three days to start working, but can take as long as a week.

You can usually return to work the day after the injection, but always check with your doctor.

### **How long can I expect pain relief?**

The extent and duration of pain relief may depend on the amount of disc, dural, or nerve inflammation. Other coexisting factors may be responsible for your pain. Sometimes an injection can bring several weeks to months of pain relief and then more treatment is needed. Other times, one injection brings long-term pain relief. If your pain is caused by injury to more than one area, only some of your symptoms may be helped by one injection.

*This information is for general education only. Specific questions or concerns should always be discussed with your doctor.*