

# CERVICAL SELECTIVE NERVE ROOT BLOCK

## For Neck and Arm Pain

A cervical selective nerve root block is an outpatient procedure for treating neck, upper back, shoulder and arm pain. This procedure targets specific nerve roots. This information sheet will explain what it is. Your doctor can explain if it is for you.

### What is the epidural space?

The dura is a protective covering of the spinal cord and its nerves. The space surrounding the dura is called the epidural space. In the neck it is called the cervical epidural space.

### What causes pain in the epidural space?

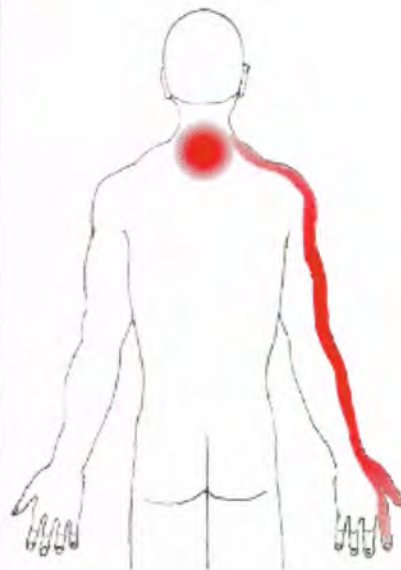
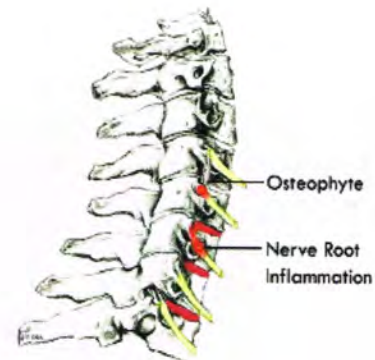
The cervical area of the spine has seven bones called vertebrae. Soft discs found between these vertebrae cushion them, hold them together and control motion. A disc tear may cause a disc to bulge, inflaming nerve roots or the dura and cause pain. Bone spurs called osteophytes can also press against nerve roots and cause pain.

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

If you have pain in your neck or upper back when you move your head or neck, you may have cervical disc and dural inflammation. If pain travels to your arm when you move your head or neck, you may have nerve root inflammation. Common tests such as MRIs can show disc bulges and nerve root compression, but may not show a torn disc. A cervical epidural injection may provide relief if disc, dural or nerve root inflammation are causing your pain.

### What is a selective nerve root block?

In a cervical epidural steroid injection, a corticosteroid (anti-inflammatory medicine) is injected into the epidural space to reduce inflammation. A local anesthetic (numbing medicine) may also be injected. If the needle is positioned next to an individual nerve root, it is called a nerve root block. It puts medication directly along an inflamed nerve root. A selective nerve root block can determine if a specific nerve is causing your pain.



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## What happens during an injection?

A local anesthetic will be used to numb your skin. The doctor will then insert a thin needle directly into the epidural space. X-ray will be used to ensure the safe and proper position of the needle. X-ray dye also may be injected to make sure the needle is in the correct spot. Once the doctor is sure the needle is correctly placed, the medicine will be injected.

## What happens after an injection?

You will be monitored for up to 60 minutes after the injection. When you are ready to leave, the staff will give you discharge instructions. It may help to move your neck 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 your neck and arm for a period of time after the injection, which may indicate the medicine has reached the correct spot. Your pain may return after this short pain-free period, or may be a little worse for a day or two. 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 root inflammation. Sometimes other coexisting factors may be responsible for the pain. An injection may bring several weeks to months of pain relief, and then further treatment may be needed. Other times a single injection brings long term pain relief.



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