

LUMBAR TRANSFORAMINAL EPIDURAL STEROID INJECTION

For Chronic Low Back Pain

A lumbar transforaminal steroid injection is an outpatient procedure for treating chronic low back pain. 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 lower back it is called the lumbar epidural space.

What causes pain in the epidural space?

The lumbar area of the spine has five 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?

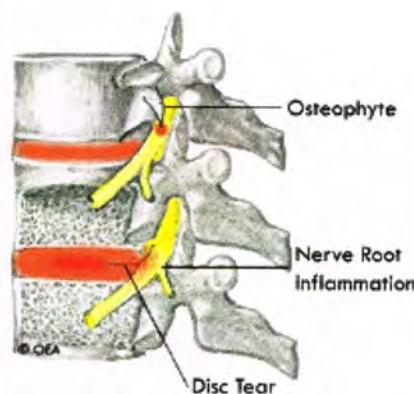
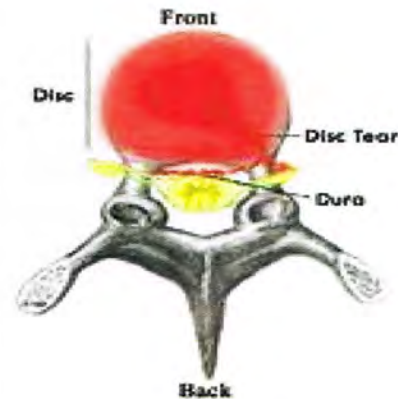
If you have pain in your lower back when you move you may have lumbar disc and dural inflammation. If pain travels down your leg when you move you may have lumbar nerve root inflammation. Common tests such as MRIs can show disc bulges and nerve root compression, but may not show a torn disc. A lumbar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

What is a lumbar transforaminal epidural steroid injection?

In a lumbar transforaminal 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.

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.



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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 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 low back for a period of time after the injection, this 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 is needed, other times a single injection brings long term pain relief.



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