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Epidual Injection Information

What is the epidural space?

The covering over the nerve roots in the spine is called the dura. The space surrounding this dura is called the epidural space. Nerves travel through the epidural space before they travel down into your legs. The nerves leave the spine from small nerve holes. Inflammation of these nerve roots may cause pain to radiate down the limbs. These nerve roots may become inflamed due to irritation from a damaged disc or from contact with a bone spur.

What is a lumbar epidural injection and why is it helpful?

An epidural injection places anti-inflammatory medicine into the epidural space to stop nerve root inflammation. The purpose is to reduce inflammation and allow for improved healing potential. By stopping or limiting nerve root inflammation, we may be able to reduce your pain. The epidural injection may assist the injury to heal by reducing inflammation. It may provide permanent relief or provide a period of pain relief that will allow other treatments, like physical therapy, to be more effective. We hope it will reduce your pain during the next several months while the injury is healing.

What will happen to me during the procedure?

While lying on an x-ray table, your skin will be well cleaned. The physician will numb a small area of skin, which may sting for a few seconds. Next, the physician will use x-ray guidance to direct a small needle into the epidural space. The physician will then inject contrast dye to confirm that the medicine spreads appropriately in the epidural space. If the medicine does not spread appropriately, the physician may use a small catheter to reach the target epidural space. After this, the physician will inject the medicine and remove the needle. Your skin at the injection site will be cleaned and bandaged.

What should I do after the procedure?

You will wait 30 – 60 minutes in recovery before going home. You are not to drive for eight hours. You should avoid any aggravating activities. Call the office during business hours if you have any questions or concerns.

General Pre/Post Instructions

You should not eat or drink anything for at least 4 hours before the procedure. If you are an insulin dependent diabetic, do not have this procedure without coordinating your sugar control with your diabetes doctor as steroid injections may raise your blood sugar. Take your routine medications before the procedure (such as high blood pressure and diabetes medications). Stop aspirin and all anti-inflammatory medications (e.g. Motrin, Ibuprofen, Aleve, Advil, Nuprin, Naproxen, Excedrin) 7 days before the procedure. These medicines may be restarted after the procedure. You may take your regular pain medicine as needed before/after the procedure. If you are on Coumadin, Heparin, Lovenox, Plavix, or Ticlid, you must notify the office so that the timing of stopping these medications can be explained. Please notify our office if you are on antibiotics as we may need to postpone your procedure. If you have an active infection or fever, we will not do the procedure. You will be at the hospital as an out-patient for 2 – 3 hours. You will need to bring a driver with you. You may return to your current level of activities the next day.