

Epidural steroid injections



Information for patients

This information leaflet explains epidural steroid injections. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to any member of the team caring for you.

Confirming your identity

Before you have a treatment or procedure, our staff will ask you your **name** and **date of birth** and check your **ID band**. If you don't have an ID band we will also ask you to confirm your address.

If we don't ask these questions, then please ask us to check.

Ensuring your safety is our primary concern.

Consent

We must by law obtain your written consent to any operation and some other procedures beforehand. Staff will explain the risks, benefits and alternatives before they ask you to sign a consent form. If you are unsure about any aspect of the treatment proposed, please do not hesitate to ask to speak with a senior member of staff again.

What are epidural steroid injections?

They are a mixture of local anaesthetic and steroid which is injected into the epidural space which surrounds your spinal cord. This space contains the nerve roots which send pain signals to your brain. You can have these injections anywhere in your spine depending on the site of your pain. For example: your neck (cervical), back of your chest (thoracic), lower back (caudal or transforaminal). They are used for radicular (sciatica or arm) pain.

Why do I need epidural steroid injections?

- They reduce inflammation or swelling around the nerves, which may help ease pain.
- They can greatly reduce pain for varying lengths of time but they may not be a cure.
- They can give you a pain-free period during which you can exercise and engage with physiotherapy.

What are the risks?

- **Failure:** in half of the cases injections may not work well.
- **Worsening of pain:** your pain may get worse before it gets better and it can take up to 2 - 4 weeks and it is quite common.
- **Pain and bruising:** you may have pain and bruising at the site of the injections which will wear off in 3 - 5 days.
- **Effects of the steroid:** it can cause short-term effects such as a



flushed face or an increase in your blood sugar if you are diabetic.

- **Infection:** this does not happen very often.
- **Nerve damage:** Numb patch anywhere in the legs or arms for 3 - 6 months which is uncommon to rare.
- **Leg or arm weakness:** this happens rarely.
- **Injury to or collapse of your lung (pneumothorax):** this applies only if you are having injections in your mid back (thoracic area). This does not happen very often.

What are the benefits?

The injections can:

- Greatly reduce your pain in the short- to long-term though they may not provide a cure.
- Ease your pain and enable you to exercise and engage with physiotherapy.

Are there any alternatives?

Yes, you can manage your pain with medications and exercises.

What happens during the procedure?

We do the procedure using x-rays or ultrasound to guide the injections. **If you are a woman aged under 55 and you think you may be pregnant, please tell us as x-rays can harm unborn children.**

You have the injections in one of our Day Surgery Centre theatres.

We will ask you to lie face down on a bed and carefully position you. We will clean the area where we are going to inject you (injection site) and drape sterile cloth around the area.

We will give you a local anaesthetic injection to numb your skin before you have the epidural steroid injection. If you would like

conscious sedation or gas and air, please discuss with the clinician on your outpatient appointment visit.

How long does the procedure take?

It can take up to/between 15 - 30 minutes. You will be at the hospital for 3 - 4 hours but you will not stay overnight.

What happens after the procedure?

We will move you to the recovery area, where the nurse will check your heart rate and blood pressure. If all is well, you will be moved back to the ward and reviewed by our Pain Consultant before we discharge you home.

You will need someone to accompany you home and look after you for the first 24hrs.

Will I have a follow-up appointment?

We will call you after six weeks of your procedure if needed to discuss the next steps. Depending on how successful the procedure has been, one of three things will happen.

- We will discharge you from our care.
- We will book you in for another procedure.
- We will ask you to come to the pain clinic to be seen by our Pain Team.

Who can I contact with queries or concerns?

If you have any queries or concerns, please contact the Pain office on 020 3299 3605.



Sharing your information

We have teamed up with Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals in a partnership known as King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at Guy's or St Thomas'. To make sure everyone you meet always has the most up-to-date information about your health, we may share information about you between the hospitals.

Care provided by students

We provide clinical training where our students get practical experience by treating patients. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you do not want students to be involved in your care. Your treatment will not be affected by your decision.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. The PALS office is on the ground floor of the Hambleton Wing, near the main entrance on Bessemer Road - staff will be happy to direct you. PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS.

Tel: **020 3299 3601**

Email: **kch-tr.PALS@nhs.net**

You can also contact us by using our online form at
www.kch.nhs.uk/contact/pals

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact PALS on 020 3299 1844.



