

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

SPINAL STEROID INJECTION

A spinal steroid injection is an injection of medication delivered within or near the spine to provide temporary or prolonged relief from back pain, or pain that has spread to the arms or legs. There are two types of injections: A **therapeutic injection**, which is directed into the epidural space, joint or selective nerve area, is designed to relieve pain. A **diagnostic injection** is given to determine the exact site of the pain source. An injection may consist of steroids, anesthetics, or both.

The goal of a spinal steroid injection is to reduce pain and/or inflammation. Image guidance (fluoroscopy or CT scan) will be used to help the doctor guide the needle to a specific location in order to maximize the benefits of the injection.

AM I A CANDIDATE FOR A SPINAL STEROID INJECTION?

If you have pain in the back or in the extremities radiating from the back, talk with your doctor. There are many treatments available, and a spinal steroid injection may be right for you.

HOW SHOULD I PREPARE?

- Notify your health care team if you are taking aspirin, any type of blood-thinner, anti-coagulation medication, or steroids (either orally or via injection within the last two weeks).
- Do not eat or drink for 6 hours prior to your appointment. Unless instructed otherwise, medications, including pain medications, may be taken at any time up to your arrival at the hospital.
- Arrive at the hospital one hour prior to your appointment time.
- You will need someone to drive you home.



WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT DURING THE PROCEDURE?

You will meet the physician prior to the procedure and have an opportunity to ask questions. An intravenous (IV) drip will be started in order to administer a moderate or "twilight" sedation. You should expect to be awake but comfortable. Once in the procedure room, you will be positioned on the table, either on your back or stomach. Sedation will then be administered, as well as local anesthetic to numb the skin. Next, you will receive the spinal steroid injection, after which you will be returned to the pre-op/recovery area where you will be monitored for approximately one hour before being discharged home.



ARE THERE RISKS?

As with any medical procedure, there is a small risk of complication during or after the injection. Complications that have been reported with spinal steroid injections include:

- Temporary increase in pain
- Headache
- Reaction to medications, such as rash or hot flashes
- Infection at injection site
- Bleeding
- Nerve injury
- Temporary paralysis of nerves

CT or fluoroscopy will administer a minimal, low level dose of radiation. Injections into the neck (cervical spine) also pose a risk of spinal cord injury or stroke.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE PROCEDURE?

Expect to rest the remainder of the day. You will not be able to drive until the following day, when you may return to your normal level of activity. The steroids take 1-3 days to reach their peak effect and are cleared after 10 days. You should schedule a follow up visit with the doctor that ordered your exam approximately two weeks after the injection. Each individual responds to injections differently. Responses can range from temporary to prolonged relief, partial or complete relief, and seldom there will be no response. You will be given contact information to reach your radiologist with any post-procedure questions or concerns. In the case that you feel a post procedure complication becomes life-threatening, you are advised to visit your nearest emergency room facility.

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