**Epidural Injections**

**THE ROLE OF EPIDURAL INJECTIONS IN MANAGING YOUR SPINAL PAIN**

**WHAT DO EPIDURAL INJECTIONS TREAT?**

Epidural injections are a reliable treatment for helping manage spinal pain. Depending on your pain’s location, you could receive an injection in your cervical (neck), thoracic (upper back to mid-back), lumbar (lower back) area or caudal (between the vertebrae). These injections are helpful in relieving pain caused by problems with your discs, the parts of your spine that act like shock absorbers and separate your spinal bones, called vertebrae, from each other. Common causes of disc-related pain include disc herniation, or a bulging of the disc against a nerve, and what is called discogenic pain, pain that is caused by something wrong with the disc. For example, these discs can tear. If that happens, part of the disc will start to leak chemicals. This can cause inflammation to your nerve roots resulting in pain. Epidural injections are also used for recurrent pain after surgery and for spinal stenosis.

The type of epidural injection you receive will depend on where the pain is located and what is causing your pain. It’s important to know that pain in one area of your body often has its source in a totally different area. For example, a problem in your neck can cause pain in your head, your shoulder blades, or somewhere in between.

**WILL I FEEL BETTER IMMEDIATELY?**

After your injection, medical staff will monitor you for approximately a half-hour. Some patients will feel immediate immediate pain relief. It is normal to feel numbness in the treated area immediately following your procedure. This can last up to 2 hours. You may even want to move the area in the way that used to cause pain, just to see how well your injection is working. Please, do not move the area too much or too quickly! It is also normal for your pain to come back briefly after going away. The return of your pain could last for up to two days and might be somewhat worse than it was before. If your injection contained a steroid, then that steroid might be causing this new discomfort; another possibility is irritation caused by the injection needle. The steroid usually will last about two to three days before being effective. In some cases it can take a week. You might be given a pain journal to track how your pain goes away in the days after your procedure. Returning to work or other daily physical activities depends on your individual situation. Your doctor will discuss this with you. Some patients receive long-term pain relief from just one injection. For others, the relief

**WHAT DO I DO WHEN I GO HOME?**

After your recovery on-site, you will be released to go home. Someone will need to drive you, since you should not drive or operate machinery for 12 hours after treatment. Also, you should not make important decisions for 12-24 hours. You might require some assistance in walking or getting around. Basically, just rest and take it easy. You can take your usual medication for the next 2-3 days. Most patients tolerate this procedure quite well. However, if there is a major change in your pain pattern or the amount of your pain, if you have excessive or abnormal bleeding, or if you experience persistent chills or a fever over 100°F, call your doctor’s office right away. If you cannot reach the office, go to the nearest hospital emergency room.

**COMPLICATIONS**

Spiral injection procedures are generally safe procedures. If complications occur, they are usually mild and well limited.

- **The risks of spiral injections include**, but are not limited to:
  - **Bleeding**
  - Infection
  - **Nausea**
  - **Increased appetite**
  - **Facial flushing**
  - **Increased heart rate**
  - **Nerve injury**
  - **Infection**
  - **Paralysis**
  - **Nerve injury**
  - **Infection**
  - **Paralysis**
  - **Nerve injury**
  - **Infection**

- **Common side effects from steroids include:**
  - **Face flushing**
  - **Increased appetite**
  - **Nausea**
  - **Diabetes**
  - **Increased blood sugar**
  - **Arthritis**

Some people are not good candidates for spiral injections. These include people with:

- **Active systemic infection**
- Skin infection at the site of needle puncture
- Bleeding disorder or anticoagulation
- Uncontrolled high blood pressure or diabetes
- Unstable angina or congestive heart failure
- Allergy to contrast, anesthetics, or steroids

**LOGO**

Practice Name
Practice Address
Phone/ Fax
Web Address/ Email Address

**ORDERING INFORMATION**

American Society of Interventional Pain Physicians, 81 Lakeview Drive, Paducah, KY 42001. 270.554.9412. http://www.asipp.org/brochures/default.html