

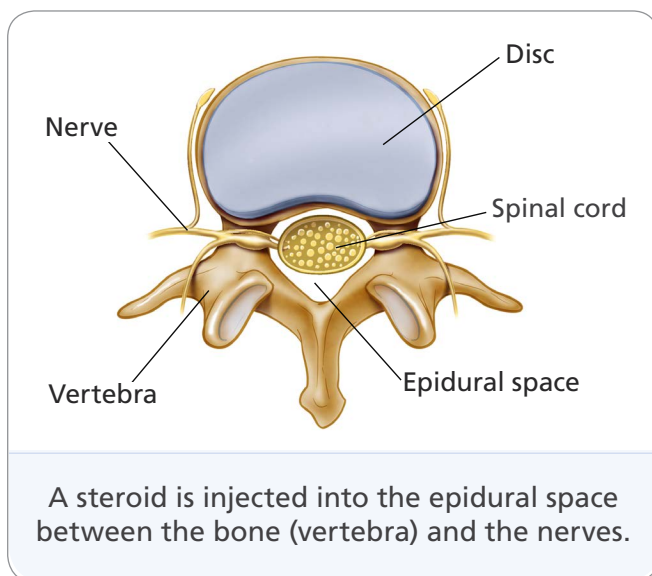
# Cervical Epidural Steroid Injection

## What is an epidural steroid injection?

An **epidural** [ep-eh-DUR-ull] **steroid injection** is an injection into the spinal area to deliver a concentrated steroid medicine and local anesthetic (numbing medicine) to reduce pain from a spinal nerve. When this treatment is done in your neck, it is called a **cervical** [SUR-veh-kul] epidural steroid injection. Steroids are a powerful anti-inflammatory medicine that can reduce pain for weeks to months. The local anesthetic provides relief by reducing pain temporarily.

## Why do I need it?

When a spinal nerve in the neck is compressed (pinched) or inflamed, it can cause neck, shoulder and arm pain, numbness, and / or weakness. An epidural steroid injection is a relatively low-risk procedure to reduce these symptoms, particularly the pain.



## How do I get ready?

Tell your doctor if you:

- **Have allergies** to any medication, especially lidocaine, steroids, or radiology contrast.
- **Take blood-thinning medicine**, such as warfarin (Coumadin), Plavix, or Eliquis.
- **Have an infection** or a fever.

## What happens during the procedure?

This procedure will be performed in a room with a movable X-ray called a fluoroscope [FLOOR-uh-skope].

- 1 You will be positioned comfortably on your stomach or side, and the staff will confirm the proper place for the injection.
- 2 Your skin will be cleaned to reduce the risk of infection. A small amount of local anesthetic will be injected into your skin to reduce the discomfort of the needle.
- 3 The doctor will use X-ray guidance to steer the needle into the spinal canal or next to the spinal nerves to an area called the epidural space.
- 4 The doctor will use a contrast dye that can be seen on the X-ray to confirm the placement of the needle in the epidural space (unless you are allergic to contrast dye). Then, the local anesthetic and steroid will be injected. The injection is usually mildly to moderately uncomfortable. The discomfort only happens a few times and lasts a few seconds. The injection is usually performed without sedation (relaxation medicine).

## What happens after the procedure?

Immediately after the injection, you will be given time to recover. The local anesthetic may provide pain relief right away, but can also cause numbness or weakness in your arms or legs for a few hours. It can be a few days for the steroid to provide pain relief. The relief often increases over 2 weeks. Most people will get relief, but not everyone, which is why your doctor will follow up with you 2 to 4 weeks after the injection. Your pain may increase up to a few days after the injection. If this happens, an ice pack may help manage your pain.

If there is no improvement, your doctor may consider other treatments, injections, or possible surgery.

## What are the side effects?

Steroids may cause facial redness, a feeling of warmth, or trouble sleeping for a few nights. They can also raise your blood sugar for a few days if you have diabetes.

## Possible benefits, risks, and alternatives

The table below lists the most common possible benefits, risks, and alternatives for epidural steroid injections. There may be other benefits or risks in your unique medical situation. Talk with your doctor to learn more about these benefits and risks. Be sure to ask any questions you may have.

Possible benefits	Risks and possible complications	Alternatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduced pain</li><li>• Increased ability to move</li><li>• Faster recovery</li><li>• Less invasive than surgery</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rare complications include bleeding, infection, nerve damage, or a “spinal headache” (caused by changes in the pressure of your spinal fluid)</li><li>• More common complications include a temporary increase in pain or a headache</li></ul>	<p>Epidural steroid injections are used to control severe or prolonged pain. It is often recommended to try other approaches, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exercises</li><li>• Physical therapy</li><li>• Watching and waiting</li><li>• Medications</li><li>• Traction</li></ul>

## Should I stop my regular medicines before the injection?

Some medicines may increase your risk of bleeding during the procedure. If you take an anticoagulant (sometimes called blood thinners), such as **warfarin** (Coumadin), **rivaroxaban** (Plavix), **dabigatran** (Eliquis), or **edoxaban** (Savaysa), talk to your doctor about your risk. To a lesser degree, other medicines such as **anti-inflammatories** (Advil, Motrin, Aleve) and **aspirin** can also increase your risk of bleeding.

**You should not stop your medicine without talking to your doctor first.**

### When should I call the doctor?

If you have any of the following symptoms after your injection, or if your symptoms worsen, **contact your doctor**. If you are unable to reach your doctor, go to an emergency room to be checked.

- Numbness, tingling, pain, or weakness in your arms or legs that increases after the injection
- Fever, chills, or sweats
- Severe headache
- Wetting or soiling yourself, or unable to urinate
- Difficulty walking
- Reduced coordination in your hands

Intermountain Healthcare complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. Se proveen servicios de interpretación gratis. Hable con un empleado para solicitarlo. 我們將根據您的需求提供免費的口譯服務。請找尋工作人員協助。

© 2019 Intermountain Healthcare. All rights reserved. The content presented here is for your information only. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice, and it should not be used to diagnose or treat a health problem or disease. Please consult your healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns. More health information is available at [intermountainhealthcare.org](http://intermountainhealthcare.org). Patient and Provider Publications FS599-01/19 (Last reviewed -01/19) Also available in Spanish.