

Chronic Pain Clinic

Epidural Injections

What is an epidural injection?

An epidural injection is one method that is used to provide pain relief. It has been used for many years as an effective form of analgesia during childbirth.

An epidural is an injection into an area of your back that surrounds the spinal cord. Local anaesthetic and steroid will be injected. This will bathe the nerve roots which may have an effect on your pain.

Epidural injections can be given anywhere along the length of the spine. This may be in the neck (cervical), ribs (thoracic), lower back (lumbar), or tailbone (caudal).

Before the procedure

- Treatment takes place as an outpatient at the Ely day Surgery Unit or Addenbrookes Pain Clinic. This will be confirmed at your clinic appointment.
- You will have a morning or an afternoon appointment.
- On arrival, you will be asked to complete questionnaires.
- Your stay may be between two to four hours. Before any treatment begins you will be asked to provide assurance that someone is able to drive you home.
- You will be asked to change into a theatre gown and your blood pressure and pulse will be recorded. Your doctor will then discuss the procedure with you and ask you to sign a consent form.

The procedure

- In the treatment room, you may have a small needle (Cannula) placed in the back of your hand. This allows the doctor to give you sedation if necessary.
- Once you are lying in the correct position, the doctor will clean your back with an antiseptic solution which can feel very cold.
- The procedure will be carried out under x-ray screening.

- Local anaesthetic is injected into your back which may sting at first, but the area will soon go numb. When the epidural injection takes place you may feel a pushing sensation or some discomfort.
- Contrast (a solution which shows up under x-ray) is injected to make sure that the needle is in the correct position.
- Drugs can then be injected and a feeling of tightness may be felt. A cold spray may be used over the injection site once the procedure is completed.

After the injection

- You will be taken to the recovery area where the nursing staff will observe you.
- You may feel a little drowsy and wish to sleep.
- You will lay flat for approx 45 minutes and then be assisted to sit up. We will offer you some light refreshment.
- Your blood pressure and pulse will be checked frequently.
- Before you leave, the doctor will see you again and ask a few questions about your pain and any effects that the injection may have had.

Please ensure that you have arranged for someone to drive you home after this procedure. Failure to do so will result in your procedure being cancelled.

If you have had sedation, we recommend that you arrange for someone to stay with you overnight and that you do not drive for 24 hours.

Possible side effects/risks

- Unfortunately, no procedure is risk free.
- Although long term side effects and complications are uncommon, they can occur.
- Not all nerves in the epidural space carry pain messages. Some nerves carry instructions to the leg muscles. If these nerves are numbed then your legs could temporarily become heavy or weak.
- Also, you may be unaware of the need to pass urine; this will be temporary.
- You may have mild local tenderness at the site of the injection, which will usually settle over the next few days.

- Sometimes after the procedure your blood pressure can fall and you may feel faint.
- On rare occasions during insertion of the epidural needle, the layer beneath the epidural space gets punctured. You may then get a headache
- **If a severe headache does develop following your injection, take some paracetamol, drink plenty of water and lay flat. If the headache continues for more than 24 hours please contact your GP or the pain clinic.**
- Other risks could include an increase in pain, infection, bruising, bleeding or nerve damage

What to expect afterwards

- Some rapid relief of your pain may be noticed due to the local anaesthetic. It could take several days before the steroid becomes effective.
- Take your regular pain killers as normal.
- Try to keep on the move about the house but do not do anything too strenuous.
- As your pain decreases you should try to gently increase your exercise. Simple activities like a daily walk, using an exercise bike or swimming on your back will help to improve your muscle tone and strengthen your back. The best way is to increase your activity slowly.
- Try not to overdo things on a good day so that you end up paying for it with more pain the following day.

Follow up

A letter will be sent to your GP and one of the nurses will telephone you in approximately four weeks.

Points to remember

- Please bring your glasses if you need them for reading
- Always bring a list of all current medication.
- Continue taking all your usual medication on treatment day.
- If there is any possibility you may be pregnant please inform the doctor or nurse.

Additional information

The information in this leaflet is not intended to replace your doctor's advice. If you require more information or have any questions please speak to your doctor or contact the Pain Clinic.

Telephone number: 01223 217796



Addenbrooke's is smoke-free. You cannot smoke on site. For advice on quitting, contact your GP or the NHS smoking helpline free, 0800 169 0 169

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format: 01223 216032 or patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Informacje te można otrzymać w innych językach, w wersji dużym drukiem lub audio. Zamówienia prosimy składać pod numerem: 01223 216032 lub wysyłając e-mail: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Polish

Se precisar desta informação num outro idioma, em impressão de letras grandes ou formato áudio por favor telefone para o 01223 216032 ou envie uma mensagem para:

patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Portuguese

Если вам требуется эта информация на другом языке, крупным шрифтом или в аудиоформате, пожалуйста, обращайтесь по телефону 01223 216032 или на вебсайт patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Russian

若你需要此信息的其他語言版本、大字體版或音頻格式，請致電 01223 216032 或發郵件到: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Cantonese

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Turkish

এই তথ্য বাংলায়, বড় অক্ষরে বা অডিও টেপে পেতে চাইলে দয়া করে 01223 216032 নম্বরে ফোন করুন বা patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk ঠিকানায় ই-মেইল করুন।

Bengali

Document history

Authors	The Chronic Pain Team
Department	Chronic Pain Service, Box 215, Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 0QQ www.addenbrookes.org.uk
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