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Piedmont Comprehensive
Pain Management Group LLC

managing your pain
improving your quality of life



Lumbar Epidural Steroid Injection

What is a Lumbar Epidural Steroid Injection?

A lumbar epidural steroid injection (*LESI*) is an injection of local anesthetic (*numbing medicine*) and steroid medication into the epidural space. The epidural space is located just outside (*epi*) the membrane that covers the spinal cord and nerve roots (*the dura*). Nerves travel through the epidural space to the neck, back and into the legs and arms. Inflammation of these nerve roots may cause pain in these areas. Steroids are powerful anti-inflammatory agents that work best when injected directly into the area where the inflammation is occurring. The goal of a lumbar epidural steroid injection is to provide pain relief by reducing inflammation of the nerve roots where they exit the spine. Common indications for a LESI include back pain, herniated discs, degenerative disc disease, radiculopathy or radiculitis, and spinal stenosis. It is important to understand that a lumbar epidural steroid injection will not correct the pre-existing medical condition, but it may significantly improve the level of pain.

What to expect when receiving a Lumbar Epidural Steroid Injection?

A LESI is a minor surgical procedure that may be performed in the PCPMG office, in the outpatient operating room at St. Francis hospital, or in the Physician Surgery Center in Anderson. The procedure lasts from 15 to 30 minutes. You will be asked to sign a consent form prior to the injection. Your physician may choose to perform the procedure with you sitting in a chair or lying on your stomach. After being cleansed with an antiseptic solution, the skin on the back of your neck will be anesthetized (*numbed*) with a local anesthetic. At this time you may feel a temporary stinging or burning sensation. Once numbed, a small needle is advanced into the epidural space, and the steroid mixture will be injected into the epidural space. It is not uncommon to experience a feeling of pressure at this point in the procedure. Next, the needle will be carefully removed, and the procedure will be complete. Following the procedure, the injection site will be cleansed, and a band aid will be applied.

How will I feel after the Injection?

Immediately following the injection you may experience temporary pain relief that may last for several hours. This is due to the numbing medication, and once the numbing medicine wears off, your pain may return. It may take two to three days for the anti-inflammatory steroid medication to have an effect. For this reason, it may be several days before you notice a change in our pain. In rare cases, your pain may temporarily increase following the injection. This is due to an increase in pressure within the epidural space. It is not uncommon to need more than one injection to get long term benefit. Lumbar epidural steroid injections are done routinely in a series of three injections about two weeks apart if needed.

Common Risks Associated with Lumbar Epidural Steroid Injections

Lumbar epidural steroid injections are considered a very safe, minimally invasive procedure. However, like any injection procedure, there are some associated risks/side effects. Common complications include bleeding and bruising at the injection site, post-procedure headaches, dizziness or lightheadedness immediately following the procedure, and numbness or weakness. If you experience any concerning symptoms following your injection, you should call your doctor immediately or go to an emergency room.

Pre and Post Procedure Instructions

- Bring a driver to your injection appointment. You will be rescheduled if you do not have a driver. This is for your own safety
- Discuss any anti-coagulants (*blood thinners*) that you are currently taking with your physician. It may or may not be necessary to discontinue some of these medications for a short time prior to this injection.
- Do not work the day of your injection. You should be able to return to work the following day.

If you have any questions regarding your procedure, do not hesitate to contact us.