

PATIENT INFORMATION

CAUDAL EPIDURAL INJECTION

A caudal epidural is an injection into the epidural space. A mix of local anaesthetic and slow-release steroids are used. The aim is to reduce the inflammation, irritation of nerves and pressure around the affected area as well as pain relief. The injection is performed as a day case, under sedation, which means you can go home the same day.

This procedure is used when the nerves going down your legs are irritated by being in a tight canal, spinal stenosis, and also when the nerves are being compressed by a disc prolapse or bulge. The aim of the epidural injection is to reduce the inflammation, irritation and pain whilst the underlying problem hopefully improves over the passage of time. This is particularly the case with disc prolapses (bulges) as they often reduce in size over the months following their appearance. It is not a cure but hopefully it reduces pain and therefore allows you to move more normally and increase your exercise.



The epidural space lies between the bones and the discs which form the skeleton of the spine. The space also contains the dura which is the sleeve containing the nerves which go down your legs. Medicines put into this epidural space can have a direct action on the nerves where they leave the dura and pass through the spaces between the bones. A caudal epidural is typically done low down on the sacrum to allow a safe injection to be performed some distance from the dura and the nerves that go down your legs. The injection is given whilst you are under sedation to make it more comfortable and so that minimal discomfort is suffered at the time of treatment.

BEFORE

Please advise us of any medical conditions you have prior to your admission such as high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, heart problems etc. To avoid bleeding around the spinal nerves it is important to stop blood-thinning medication such as Warfarin. This needs to be discussed with Mr Quaile before your procedure takes place.

Also it is very important that we have a complete list of medications that you have been prescribed by your doctor or have bought at the chemist and are currently taking. This includes homeopathic remedies.

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If you feel unwell on the day then please contact Mr Quaile's office or the hospital before you make the journey in, as it may be necessary to re-schedule the procedure.

Please follow the fasting instructions given to you by Mr Quaile's office and the hospital.

ON THE DAY

On the day of your procedure please arrive promptly. Please remember you will not be able to drive home after the procedure and if you are taking a taxi you will need to be accompanied. You are very welcome to bring someone along with you for company.

At the time of admission you will be asked to complete various forms. Mr Quaile will visit you on the ward prior to treatment and he will explain the procedure to you in full and then ask you to sign the consent form to confirm you are happy to proceed. Please do not hesitate to ask any questions or mention concerns that you may have at this time.

You will be taken to the operating theatre as epidurals need to be done in a clean area. The procedure takes about 15-20 minutes. You will be placed in a lying position on your front or on your side. A small needle may be placed in a vein on the back of your hand to give you the sedation and fluid or other medicines if necessary. The sedation will make you feel very sleepy and you may not remember the procedure. The injection site will be cleaned with antiseptic solution and then x-rays will be used to guide the correct placement of the needle into the epidural space.

Once you are back on the ward and awake you will be offered something to eat and drink. After that you should be able to get up and walk unaided. You are required to stay in hospital for 2-3 hours after the procedure depending on your recovery.

Immediately after the injection you may feel numbness, tingling and heaviness in the groin and legs but this will reduce as the local anaesthetic wears off. It may be difficult to pass urine for a while and your blood pressure may drop a little but this should return to normal within a few hours.

AFTER

You will need someone to take you home and you should have a responsible adult to care for you on your first night at home.

We recommend that you rest for the next 24 hours and in particular try to avoid bending, twisting or lifting. We also advise that, due to the effects of sedation, you should not drive a car, drink any alcohol, operate equipment or sign legal documents during this time.

If you have a small dressing over the injection area this can be removed the next day.



You may find that you feel more pain for a few days afterwards as initially the injection may stir things up before the slow release steroids start to work. It can take between seven days to six weeks before the full effects of the injection are known. This is normal, however please do not hesitate to call us if you are worried.

You should continue to take your usual medication and analgesia as required.

You can return to work as soon as you feel you can cope.

Avoid any strenuous exercise for a week after the epidural injection.

A follow up appointment will be made for you three weeks post injection.



WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT

Some people experience immediate relief of their symptoms that can last for weeks or months, others find it takes about six weeks or so before they find any relief and for others regrettably there is little or no benefit. No treatment is guaranteed to work for all. However it can be the start of an effective treatment plan in improving pain by allowing you a 'window of opportunity' for rehabilitation via physical therapy to occur. We advise that you start or return to a good exercise plan as soon as possible as this will hopefully reduce your symptoms and strengthen your core. We may recommend a short course of physiotherapy as the physiotherapist will be able to advise you regarding the most appropriate exercises for you.

SIDE EFFECTS AND RISKS

Rarely you may get a headache after the injection due to a spinal fluid leak. This is treated by bed rest or by a blood patch if the headache persists. Please let the nursing staff know immediately if you are on the ward or telephone your GP if you are at home.



There are very small risks of infection, nerve damage, blood clots and fits. Whilst these risks are very small, the consequences may be serious. There is also a very rare complication of the local anaesthetic interfering with breathing which would be temporary as the effects wear off.



EMERGENCY INFORMATION

If you develop any of these following symptoms following your discharge please contact your general practitioner immediately:

- Severe headache or pain
- Fever or chills
- Redness and swelling around the injection site
- Loss of bladder or bowel control
- Numbness in the saddle area
- Numbness in legs or arms
- Weakness in legs or arms
- Pins and needles in legs or arms



CONTACT

Please contact us if you have any problems or questions.

email: support@spine-works.com



telephone: 01256 377653

