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LUMBAR EPIDURAL INJECTION

WHAT IS IT

The DURA is a membrane that protects the brain, spinal cord, and nerves. The space around the dura is called the “epidural space.” Anytime medicine is put into this space, it is called an “epidural”. Epidural injections of medication can be used to treat spine pain or to help find out where the pain is coming from. To ensure proper placement of the medication the procedure is done under fluoroscopy (a type of low dose x-ray).

PURPOSE

Back pain is often due to injury or inflammation of the disc and other supporting structures. The nerves are very close to the discs and they can be irritated as well, causing pain down the leg. Steroid medication can reduce inflammation and pain from the disc, nerves, and other structures.

WHAT TO EXPECT

During the injection, pain is sometimes increased temporarily. You will be awake during the injection, but sedation can be given if you make prior arrangements with your doctor. The procedure can be stopped immediately at any time upon your request. Following the procedure you may experience some increased discomfort for about 2-3 days while the steroid medication is taking effect. Most people are able to return to work and usual activities on the following day.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS

Every medical procedure, no matter how small, contains some risks. Anytime a needle is placed into your body there is a risk of tissue injury, infection, and bleeding. If this occurs in or near the spine it can result in severe damage. Although extremely rare, severe nerve damage and death have occurred following spine injections. Injections near the spine also risk dural puncture and spinal headache. More common risks include temporary increase in pain, local tenderness after the injection, allergic reaction to medication, and side effects from the steroids.