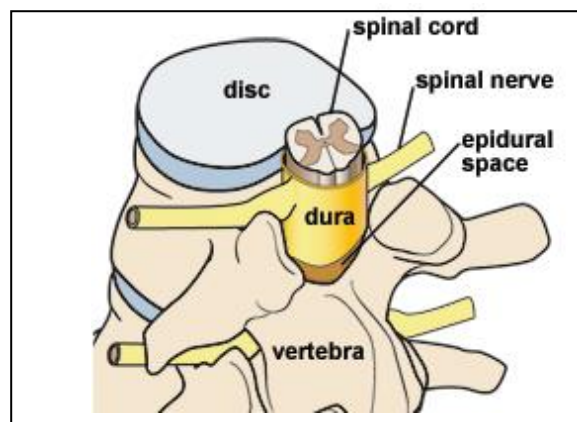


Patient Information: Epidural Steroid Injection**What is an epidural injection and how can it help me?**

An epidural injection is a procedure where an anti-inflammatory medication, called a steroid, is placed directly into the epidural space around the nerve to help decrease inflammation of the nerve roots. This is done to help reduce or manage your pain. The procedure is intended to make your pain better and improve function by treating the cause of the pain and symptoms. For some individuals, this may only be a temporary solution as the cause of the symptoms is a progressive disorder.

What is the epidural space?

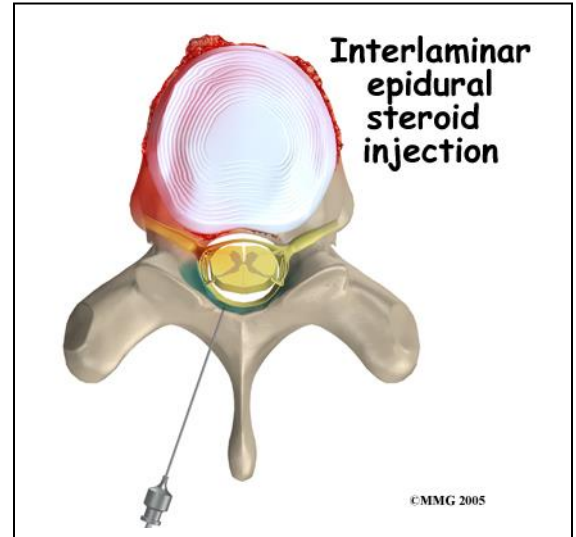
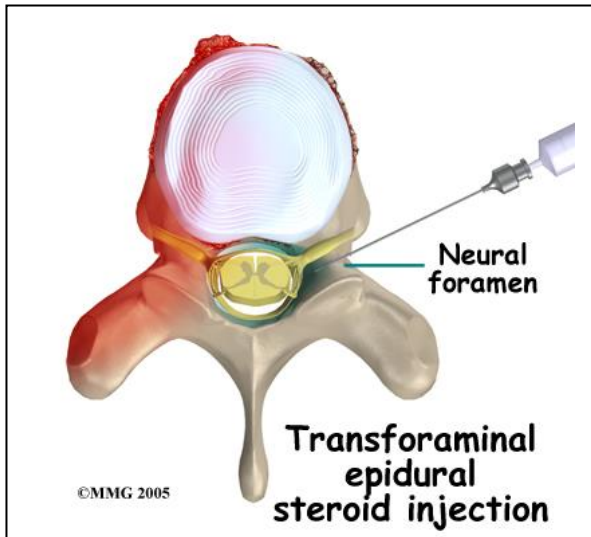
The membrane that covers the spinal cord and nerve roots in the spine is called the dura. The area surrounding the outside of the dura is the epidural space. Nerves to the back, legs, neck and arms travel through this space. When these nerve roots become inflamed or irritated, it may cause pain. Inflammation and irritation can have many causes and your doctor will discuss these with you.

**What is injected into the epidural space?**

The medication injected is known as a corticosteroid. More commonly, steroids are known as cortisone. Cortisone is a [steroid hormone](#). It is one of the main hormones released by the [adrenal gland](#) in response to stress. It is used to treat a variety of ailments and can be injected in to the joint or other spaces where inflammation is occurring. Cortisone suppresses the immune system, thus reducing inflammation, pain and swelling at the site of the injury. The typical medication formulation is Dexamethasone or Betamethasone, depending on the site and type of injection.

How is the medication delivered?

There are two most common approaches used to deliver the medication: transforaminal and interlaminar. The transforaminal approach means that the needle is guided to the foramen (tunnel), through which the nerve roots pass. The interlaminar approach means that the needle is guided through the space between the bones to access the space where the nerves lie. The method used to deliver the medication and the choice of medication used will be discussed with you by your doctor, as this is patient specific depending on the cause of your symptoms.



Is the procedure safe?

Like any procedure, there are risks, benefits and trade-offs. Your doctor may recommend different combinations of medication and approaches depending on several factors, including your specific medical conditions and pain issues.

With technology such as fluoroscopy available today, injection procedures for pain are remarkably safe, but with any intervention there are potential risks. Millions of patients have received epidural steroids over the last three decades and the incidence of complications are very rare. Your doctor will discuss specific risks and alternatives with you. Your physician will talk to you about these risks, which may include: increase in pain, infection, bleeding, nerve injury, headache, or a reaction to the medication that is injected. Your physician will also discuss the different ways that the needle can be inserted into the epidural space and the risks and benefits for each one.

It is important that you have the information you need so that you can make an informed decision regarding your procedure. You are encouraged to ask your physician questions. You should only agree to have the injection done when you fully understand the risks and alternatives and have made a decision to proceed.

The staff and providers at Keck Medicine of USC are dedicated to providing the most technically advanced care while preserving excellent customer service. It is our goal to exceed your expectations. By working with our patients and their families as a team we can continue to improve the services we render and provide you with the highest quality care.

Gene Tekmyster, DO