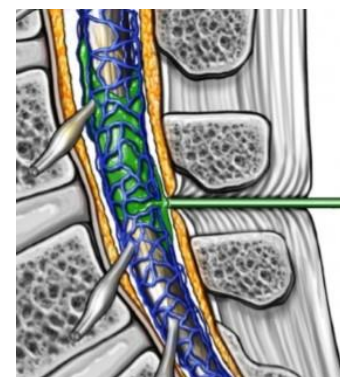


## What is an epidural steroid injection?

Your doctor has recommended an epidural steroid injection as part of the management of your back pain.

The most common cause of severe back pain is an inflammatory response to nerve root irritation. This irritation is most commonly caused by either a prolapsed disc or by trapping of the nerve as it passes through one of the bony canals in the spinal column on its way to the lower limb.

Steroids are an anti-inflammatory medication that may decrease the inflammatory response which reduces the pain.



Needle inserted into epidural space

## Preparation

If you are on blood thinning agents such as Warfarin or Clopidogrel, you will need to see your doctor prior to the procedure as these medications may need to be ceased. A blood test will also need to be completed prior to the procedure to check clotting time.

It is recommended that you arrange for someone to take you home after your injection as a precaution.

## Procedure

The procedure involves inserting a needle into the epidural space. This space lies within the bony ring of the spinal column, just outside the fluid filled sac that surrounds the spinal cord. The nerves that supply power and sensation to the lower limbs pass through this sac, across the epidural space and then exit the spinal column by the bony canals.

When the needle has been inserted into the epidural space, a solution is injected containing steroid medication. The procedure is done with CT guidance in the Medical Imaging Department.

## Risks of facet joint steroid injection

Risks can include:

### Common

- Backache due to muscle spasm
- Increase in sciatic pain due to the pressure of the fluid injected
- Headache which changes with posture. This usually resolves in a few days with rest and paracetamol. Further treatment may be required if it doesn't resolve. See your doctor if you experience these symptoms



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## Rare

- Permanent nerve damage
- Collection of blood surrounding the nerve root. This could also cause pressure requiring an operation
- Infection
- Allergic reaction

## Post Procedure

After the procedure, you will be observed in the Medical Imaging Department for about 30 minutes, after which you are allowed to go home.

You must not perform any activity that will strain your back such as heavy lifting and you are unable to drive for 24 hours. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact Medical Imaging reception on (03) 5352 9325 or your doctor.



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EGHS would like to thank our consumers for reviewing this information.

