

Patient Information: Caudal Epidural

What is a Caudal Epidural Injection?

An epidural injection is used to deliver medication to the spinal canal, between the bony outer margins and the nerves and their coverings (the epidural space). A **caudal epidural** refers to the method used to perform the procedure, involving an injection just above the tailbone (coccyx), where there is a small area where access to the epidural space is possible.

What does it involve?

- You will be lying on your front for the procedure, which usually takes **10 - 20 minutes**. Local anaesthetic is injected to numb the skin and a fine needles is passed toward the caudal hiatus, just above the coccyx. The needle does not need to be deep as this area is just below the skin. The procedure can be performed using xray guidance.
- Once the needle is confirmed to be in place, the injection takes place.

What is Injected?

- **A small quantity of dye** (which can be seen on the xray images) is used to confirm that the injection is into the joint.
- **Local Anaesthetic** – injected into the epidural space.
- **Steroid** – injected into the epidural space.

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Does it Work?

The injection may be used as a potential treatment when it is known from the clinical findings and investigations that the disc or nerve root is the source of pain. There may be some prolonged pain relief from the steroid which may last several weeks. The pain may return after some time and a decision will then be made to consider repeating it (if there is considered to be a chance of your pain settling naturally) or progressing to further interventions such as nucleoplasty or surgery.

Risks and Side Effects:

Due to the procedure:

- Infection – rare.
- More discomfort for the first few days after your injection.
- Bruising to the injection area.
- Headache – occurs infrequently due to the nerve coverings being breached by the needle tip causing leakage of CSF (cerebrospinal fluid).
- Allergy to injected medication.

Due to the injected steroid:

- Facial flushing for a few days.
- Temporary alteration of your usual menstrual cycle (females).
- Temporary increase in your sugar levels (diabetics)

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What Happens on the Day of My Appointment?

- **You can eat and drink.**
- Take all your tablets as normal. Bring a list of your tablets with you.
- A nurse will take some details from you to check that you are fit for your procedure.
- You will be asked to sign a consent form. The doctor will be able to answer any questions you may have at this time.
- You will be at the Day Unit or radiology department for about 1 - 2 hours. This time may vary depending on unforeseen circumstances.
- After you have had your procedure, you will need to stay with us for about 30 minutes before you can go home.

You must **NOT** drive home or go home on public transport.

Please arrange for someone to collect you from the Day Unit.

You are allowed to go home by taxi.

After Your Injection

- Take things easy for the rest of the day. Do not do any excessive exercise or heavy work for the first few days.
- Remove the dressing the next morning.
- Continue to take your pain tablets till you notice any improvement in your symptoms.

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Important Information

Please inform the Day Unit if you are **diabetic**, have a **cough** or **cold** or have any kind of **infection**.

You must inform us if you are taking any of the following tablets – **antibiotics, aspirin, warfarin** or **clopidogrel** before attending as some of these may need to be stopped some days before.

Information for females - We will need to know the start date of your last menstrual period due to the use of x-ray equipment. If you think you might be pregnant, contact the Day Unit for advice.

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