

Lumbar Epidural Steroid Injection (LESI)

Patient Information

What is a Lumbar Epidural Steroid Injection?

A lumbar epidural steroid injection (LESI) is a minimally invasive procedure used to help reduce inflammation and relieve pain caused by irritation of the spinal nerves in the lower back. The medication is injected into the epidural space, the area surrounding the spinal nerves.

The injection is intended to decrease inflammation, improve function, and allow you to participate more comfortably in physical therapy and daily activities.

Why is this procedure performed?

Your healthcare provider may recommend a lumbar epidural steroid injection if you have:

- Herniated (bulging) lumbar disc
- Sciatica (pain traveling down the leg)
- Lumbar spinal stenosis
- Degenerative disc disease with nerve inflammation
- Lumbar radiculopathy ("pinched nerve")

Common symptoms include:

- Low back pain
 - Buttock pain
 - Pain radiating into one or both legs
 - Numbness or tingling
 - Weakness related to nerve irritation
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Before Your Procedure

Please let us know if you:

- Take blood thinners (such as warfarin, Eliquis®, Xarelto®, Pradaxa®, Plavix®, or aspirin) In most circumstances we get permission from your prescribing physician to hold these for safety.
- Have diabetes- steroid can make it harder to control blood sugar.
- Are pregnant or think you may be pregnant

- Have an active infection or fever
- Have allergies to contrast dye, iodine, latex, steroids, or local anesthetics

Day of the Procedure

Hospital

- If procedure is in hospital you will check in on the main floor 1 hour prior to procedure time. You will be brought up to procedure area by guest services.
- **Sedation** nothing to eat or drink 8 hours prior to procedure time. Small sips of water ok up to 2 hours prior, medications as normal.
- Must have a driver over the age of 18 that stays at hospital during procedure time. Uber/ hospital ride not permitted for sedation. Hospital policy.
- If no sedation- eat if you like! Driver not needed

Office:

- Check in at Pod 2 at least 10 minutes prior to injection.
 - Wear comfortable clothing that is easy to adjust
 - Women if cervical spine treated normal non racer back bra
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What Happens During the Procedure?

1. You will lie face down on the procedure table.
2. Your lower back will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution.
3. A local anesthetic is used to numb the skin.
4. Using live X-ray guidance (fluoroscopy), the physician carefully places a small needle into the epidural space.
5. Contrast dye is often injected to confirm proper needle placement.
6. A mixture of steroid medication and local anesthetic is then injected.

The procedure usually takes **10–20 minutes**, although your total visit may be about **30–60 minutes**.

What Will I Feel?

You may experience:

- Cold soap!
- A sting from numbing medicine
- Brief pressure at injection site
- Temporary reproduction of your usual leg pain
- Mild burning or fullness during the injection

Most patients tolerate the procedure very well.

After the Procedure

You may notice:

- Temporary numbness or weakness in the leg for several hours
- Mild soreness at the injection site
- Pain relief from the numbing medicine that wears off after several hours
- Improvement from the steroid beginning within **2–7 days**, although it may take up to two weeks

Activity

For the first 24 hours:

- Avoid strenuous activity.
 - No swimming
 - You may walk and perform light daily activities.
 - Resume normal activities the following day unless instructed otherwise.
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Possible Side Effects

Temporary side effects may include:

- Soreness at the injection site
- Facial flushing
- Mild headache
- Difficulty sleeping
- Temporary increase in pain
- Increased blood sugar (especially in patients with diabetes)
- Temporary menstrual irregularities or mood changes

These effects usually resolve within a few days.

Risks

Although complications are uncommon, potential risks include:

- Bleeding
- Infection
- Allergic reaction

- Nerve injury
- Dural puncture (spinal headache)
- Temporary numbness or weakness
- Lack of pain relief
- Very rare neurologic complications

Your physician uses sterile technique and X-ray guidance to minimize these risks.

When Should I Call My Doctor?

Contact your healthcare provider immediately if you develop:

- Fever greater than 101°F (38.3°C)
- Increasing redness, swelling, or drainage at the injection site
- Severe or worsening pain
- New weakness in your legs
- Loss of bowel or bladder control
- Severe headache that worsens when sitting or standing
- Difficulty breathing or signs of an allergic reaction

If you experience sudden loss of strength, loss of bowel or bladder control, or other severe neurologic symptoms, seek emergency medical care immediately.

Frequently Asked Questions

How long will the injection last?

Relief varies from person to person. Some patients experience relief for several weeks, while others may benefit for several months.

Will I need more than one injection?

Possibly. Depending on your response, your provider may recommend a series of injections or repeat treatment if symptoms return.

Is the injection a cure?

No. The injection reduces inflammation and pain but does not correct the underlying structural cause. It is often most effective when combined with exercise, physical therapy, and other treatments.

Contact Us

If you have questions before or after your procedure, or if you experience concerning symptoms, please contact our office during business hours. For severe symptoms or medical emergencies, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department.

Patient Acknowledgment

I have received and reviewed this educational information regarding lumbar epidural steroid injections. I understand the purpose of the procedure, its benefits, potential risks, and when to seek medical attention.

Patient Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____