

# Having a Caudal epidural injection for pain in the leg

Pain Management

Produced: July 2025

Information for Patients

Review: July 2028

Leaflet number: 1639 Version: 2

## What is a Caudal epidural injection?

Caudal epidural is an injection into the spine through the base near the tailbone.

We inject local anaesthetic and steroid through a small opening in the sacral bone called sacral hiatus in your lower back.

The injection includes local anaesthetic and long-acting preparation of steroid (for example, methyl-prednisolone, dexamethasone) that reduces pain.

## When do we do Caudal epidural?

Epidural steroid injection is a non-surgical treatment.

This injection is given to people who have pain across the lower back and bottom, with pain spreading down one or both legs.

It can help ease pain in the lower back and leg (sciatica) caused by irritation of the spinal nerves. This can be due to spinal stenosis, spondylosis or disc herniation.

## What do I need to do to prepare for the injection?

- You can take all your routine medications except blood thinning medicines and diabetic medicines. If you are on blood thinners, tell the doctor when you see her/him in the clinic. They will advise about stopping for a short time depending on your health. If you are a diabetic, tell the doctor when you seen in the clinic. They will advise you about this.
- You cannot eat for 6 hours before the procedure. You can drink clear water till 2 hours before the procedure.

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit [www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

- The procedure will take around 15 to 20 minutes. You will be in the hospital for 4 to 5 hours. It depends on the number of patients on the list.
- You will need to arrange for travel to and from the hospital. Please arrange for someone to stay with you overnight. You are advised to avoid driving for 24 hours.
- When you are taken to the theatre, you change into a theatre gown.

## How do we do it?

The procedure is done as a day case procedure in theatre setting. You will be fully awake and talking to the doctor.

You will be given a date and time to come for the injection. You are expected to stay for 4 to 5 hours in the hospital.

## Important information before having the procedure

You must let us know before the procedure if you:

- are taking any blood-thinning medications (warfarin, clopidogrel, apixaban, dabigatran, prasugrel, dipyridamol). This will affect how and when your procedure is done.
- think you are **pregnant**
- have **infection** at the site
- are **diabetic**
- have **epilepsy or Parkinson's disease** (It is very important to keep on taking the medicines for these if you are on them)
- have a **pacemaker**

## Before the procedure

A doctor will talk to you about the procedure. You will sign an electronic consent form.

## During the procedure:

- You will lie either on your tummy for 15 to 20 minutes. This depends on the procedure planned.
- The site will be cleaned by anti-septic.
- You will have a injection of local anaesthetic to numb the site.
- An X-ray is used to confirm the position of the needle that is used for the procedure.
- You may have some discomfort in your back or legs while the drug is injected. We will check your heart rate, blood pressure and oxygen levels during and after the procedure.
- A local anaesthetic and steroid combination is injected into the spine.

## After the injection

You may have some discomfort in your back and legs.

You will be checked in recovery for 30 to 60 minutes. You will be checked if you can walk and pee (pass urine) before being discharged. This is to check that the nerves have recovered from the local anaesthetic effect and you are safe to go home.

Do not drive for 24 hours after the injection.

Please make sure a responsible adult is with you when you leave the hospital. They must stay with you for the first night as your legs might feel weak sometimes.

## What are the benefits?

Epidural injections can help leg pain caused by problems in the spine for about 6 months. If it works, then we can book you for a repeat injection.

## What are the possible side effects?

- Infection, bleeding, bruising and some discomfort at injection site.
- Drop in blood pressure. This can make you feel light headed and unsteady on your feet. This will be treated with fluids given orally or through a drip if needed.
- Local anaesthetic toxicity: If local anaesthetic is accidentally injected into your blood vessel it can lead to fits (convulsions), drop in blood pressure and altered heart rhythm and difficulty in breathing. This is extremely rare. If it happens, you will need resuscitation and medications to support the systems.
- Nerve damage: usually short-term and very rare.
- Dural puncture ("wet tap"): This occurs in 0.5% of injections. It may cause a spinal headache (post-dural puncture headache). It usually gets better within a week. If this occurs, please contact us, drink plenty of caffeinated fluids (coffee, tea, colas). Use pain killers as needed. Although uncommon, an epidural blood patch may be needed to ease the headache.
- Steroid effect: Flushing, headache, flu-like symptoms and altered blood sugar levels. Diabetic patients may need to increase their insulin for a few days but you should talk to your diabetic clinical nurse specialist.
- You may have weakness of your bladder caused by the effect local anaesthetic that we inject in the spine. This can weaken the nerves to bladder control. This can lead to either leak or difficulty in passing pee (urine). The bladder function should return to normal within a few hours. If not, you might need to be admitted to hospital. We may need to insert a tube to drain the pee till it recovers.
- Allergy: Any medication can cause allergy and this can be serious although it is rare.
- Failure: The injection may not work to ease your pain. The injection is not a cure but aims at easing your pain.

**Please note:** No procedure is risk free. Long-term side effects and complications including an increase in pain are uncommon, the possibility cannot be ruled out.



Serious complications such as long term major nerve damage, and paralysis are very, very rare with a probable risk of 1 in 10,000.

## Can this injection be repeated?

The epidural injection can be repeated if it helps you a lot. You must wait at least 6 months.

If it does not help you, you will be invited for a follow-up appointment with doctor to look at other options.

You should be able to go back to your normal activities 24 hours after the procedure.

## Important information

Contact your GP if you have any of the following

- a fever more than 38.5 degrees celsius,
- shortness of breath,
- Not able to control your bladder or bowel
- severe headaches, more pain lasting over a week,
- increased weakness or numbness or a sign of infection at the needle site (red, warm, tender, swollen, drainage).

If you cannot get hold of your GP right away then please to the nearest A&E Emergency department.

## Follow-up

A clinical nurse specialist will phone you in about 6 months after your steroid injection.

If there is any more information you need, please ask your pain doctor or nurse.

## Contact details

Pain administrative team: 0116 258 4471 or 258 8253 Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm. There is an answerphone. We will call you back within 48 hours if you leave a message.

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔  
على هذه المعلومات بلغةٍ أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل

જો તમને અસ્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email [equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)