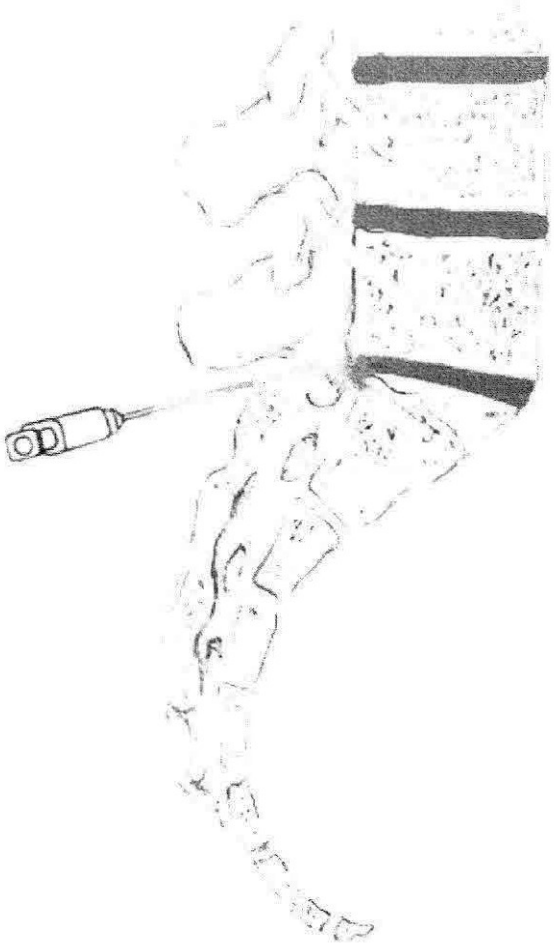
Transforaminal Epidural Injection

Overview

A lumbar transforaminal epidural steroid injection is an outpatient procedure for treating low back and leg pain.



What is the epidural space?

The dura is a protective covering of the spinal cord and its nerves. The space surrounding the dura is called the epidural space. In the lower back it is called the lumbar epidural space.

What causes pain in the epidural space?

The lumbar area of the spine has five bones, called vertebrae. Soft discs found between these vertebrae cushion them, hold them together, and control motion. If a disc tears, chemicals inside may leak out. This can inflame nerve roots or the dura, and cause pain. A large disc tear may cause a disc to bulge, inflaming nerve roots or the dura, and cause pain. Bone spurs, called osteophytes, can also press against nerve roots and cause pain.

What is a lumbar transforaminal epidural steroid injection?

In a lumbar epidural injection, a corticosteroid (anti-inflammatory medicine) is injected into the epidural space to reduce inflammation. A local anesthetic (numbing medicine) may also be injected. When it is done from the side where the nerve exits the spine, it is called a transforaminal injection. This technique puts the medication near the source of inflammation.

What happens after treatment?

You will be monitored for up to 15 minutes after the injection. When you are ready to leave, the staff will give you discharge instructions.

Take it easy for the rest of the day. You may feel immediate pain relief and numbness in your back and leg for a period of time after the injection. This may indicate the medication has reached the right spot. Your pain may return after this short pain-free period, or may even be a little worse for a day or two. It may be caused by needle irritation or by the corticosteroid itself. Corticosteroids usually take two or three days to start working, but can take as long as a week. You can usually return to work the day after the injection.

What are the results?

The extent and duration of pain relief may depend on the amount of disc, dural or nerve root inflammation. Other coexisting factors may be responsible for your pain.

Sometimes an injection brings several weeks to months of pain relief, and then further treatment is needed. Other times, a single injection brings long-term pain relief.