

## Epidural or Facet Injection

### *How to prepare and what to expect*

*This handout is for patients having either an epidural or a facet injection at UW Medicine. It tells how to prepare for your spinal procedure and what to expect.*

### What are these injections?

These injections are spinal procedures. They may be done:

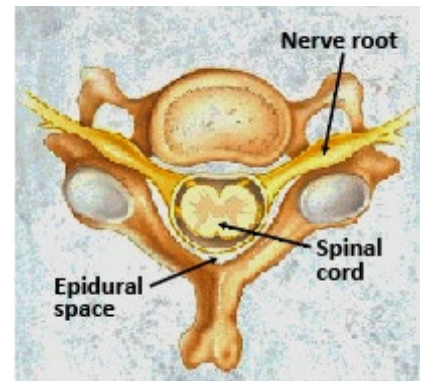
- To treat back pain
- To treat *sciatica* (pain going down the back of the leg)
- To diagnose symptoms and help plan your care
- For certain kinds of therapy

### How does an epidural differ from a facet injection?

- In an *epidural* injection, medicine is injected into the *epidural space*. This is the area between the bones in your spine (*vertebrae*) and your spinal cord.
- In a *facet* injection, medicine is injected into a *facet joint*. This is the space between 2 vertebrae.

### How do I prepare?

- Tell your provider if you have ever had an allergic reaction to *contrast* (X-ray dye). They may want to prescribe medicine for you to take before the procedure.
- *If you were assigned female at birth:* Tell your provider if you are pregnant or breastfeeding, or if there is any chance you could be pregnant.



*An epidural injection delivers medicine into the epidural space.*



*A facet injection delivers medicine into a facet joint.*

- If you take a blood-thinning medicine such as Coumadin (warfarin), Plavix, or Lovenox, talk with your provider about stopping it before and restarting it after the procedure.
- If you take insulin for diabetes, check with your doctor about adjusting your dose during the time you are not allowed to eat.
- Plan to have a responsible adult take you home. This person may drive you in a car, or ride with you on a bus, Uber, or taxi. **You may not drive yourself home or take public transport by yourself.**
- For safety, do **not** drive until for 24 hours after your procedure.

### Procedure Day

- Starting 2 hours before your procedure, do **not** eat or drink anything.
- You may take your normal medicines with a small sip of water.
- *If you take pills for diabetes:* Before the injection, tell the radiologist about these medicines.
- *If you were assigned female at birth:* Before the injection, tell the radiologist if there is any chance you could be pregnant.

## What happens during the procedure?

### If You Are Having an Epidural Injection

The radiologist will:

- Clean your lower back with an antiseptic solution
- Numb the area where the needle will be inserted
- Insert a different needle into the epidural space
- Use a special X-ray machine to help guide the needle
- Inject *contrast* to check the position
- Inject a *steroid* (a medicine to reduce inflammation) mixed with a local anesthetic into the epidural space
- Remove the needle

We will watch you for 30 minutes and then you may leave.

### If You Are Having a Facet Joint Injection

The radiologist will:

- Clean your skin and inject *licocaine* to make the area numb
- Insert a different needle into the facet joint

- Use a special X-ray machine to help guide the needle
- Inject a mixture of contrast, a numbing medicine, and a steroid
- Remove the needle

We will watch you for 30 minutes and then you may leave.

## **What will I feel during the procedure?**

You may feel some pressure during the injection.

## **Will I have pain after the procedure?**

After the procedure, some patients no longer have pain. At first, this may be due to the numbing medicine that was used. Pain may return as the numbing medicine starts to wear off. If the steroid medicine works, this pain should ease in several days to weeks. If it works, relief can last weeks or months.

But, some patients still feel pain after the procedure. If this happens, your provider might advise you have another injection. If several injections are done over a period of weeks and you do not have pain relief, more injections are not likely to help.

## **If Your Procedure Was Done to Diagnose a Problem**

The results of your procedure will be sent to your referring provider in 3 to 5 business days. Your provider will talk with you about the results of your scan.

You and your provider will then decide the next step, such as treatment for a problem, as needed.

You may also read your results on your MyChart page. If you need copies of your images on disc, call 206.598.6206.

### **Questions?**

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

- UWMC - Montlake Imaging Services: 206.598.6200
- UWMC - Roosevelt Radiology: 206.598.6868
- Harborview Imaging Services: 206.744.3105