

Spinal Surgery - Epidural Injection

Introduction

The Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on the NHS ability to provide routine elective services. We recognise that patients are waiting longer than we would all like and it is not always possible to identify when treatment will take place. This document provides you with information on how you can support yourself while waiting to attend the hospital.

Guidance for Patients

An epidural is an injection in your back to stop you feeling pain in part of your body.

Steroid medicine can also be given with an epidural injection, to treat pain in your back or leg that's caused by sciatica or a slipped (prolapsed) disc.

An epidural steroid injection involves injecting a steroid into the epidural space. This is a space that surrounds the spinal cord. Local anaesthetic (or even a solution called normal saline) with the steroid will bathe the nerve roots which send pain signals to the brain. Epidural injections can be given anywhere along the length of the spine. This may be in the neck (cervical), between the shoulder blades/back of chest (thoracic), lower back (lumbar) or tailbone (caudal). The technique of transforaminal epidural is a similar technique and injection is made through a small space at the side of the spine known as the intervertebral foramen.

Before the injection, your doctor will discuss the procedure with you. Your doctor will either obtain your consent before the injection or confirm this consent if it was previously given. The treatment will take place in a dedicated area with trained personnel. An X-ray machine (or other forms of image guidance) will often be used to enable accurate injection. Not all doctors undertake these injections in exactly the same way but the following usually happens;

- You will be prepared for the procedure as per Trust guidance
- Observations such as blood pressure and pulse rate may be made
- A small needle (cannula) will be placed in the back of your hand
- You will be carefully positioned and the skin around the injection site(s) will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution or spray; this can feel very cold
- You will feel a stinging sensation as local anaesthetic is injected to numb the skin and surrounding tissues. Your doctor will warn you of this first
- The needle is guided to the epidural space using a technique known as "loss of resistance" where there is a decrease in pressure in a syringe attached to the needle. X-ray is usually used to confirm correct placement
- The doctor will direct the injection to the epidural space close to the source of pain and usually inject contrast (a solution that is visible under imaging such as X-Ray) to ensure the needle is correctly positioned. When the injections are made, you may feel pressure, tightness or a pushing sensation in your back or leg. If there is any discomfort, do let the doctor know.

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What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

Urgent Health Advice

For urgent health advice about physical or mental health, when it's not an emergency, please call 111 from any landline or mobile phone. You can also visit www.nhs.uk. The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Life Threatening Emergencies

For something life threatening – severe bleeding, breathing difficulties or chest pains – please dial 999.

GP surgeries are still open

GP practice staff are also helping patients to manage their conditions at home while they wait for hospital appointments.

GP surgeries are still open and are working differently to how they did before the COVID-19 pandemic and GP practices continue to make best use of telephone, online and video consultations. Face-to-face appointments are still being given to those who need it.

When you phone or use an online form to contact your GP surgery to make an appointment, you will be asked some questions which are designed to help staff guide you to the most appropriate clinical person to help you with your condition. This could be a nurse, clinical pharmacist, physician's associate, GP or paramedic.

Contact Us

In some areas, we are experiencing a significant backlog following our response to the Covid-19 pandemic. We are doing everything we can to reduce this backlog including putting on extra clinics and theatre lists and opening additional sites to offer these services. We have also increased the ways we can offer appointments including offering more video and telephone appointments (as well as face to face appointments where appropriate).

Please can we request that you **do not contact your GP practice about waiting times**, as they do not have access to this information.

If you have any concerns or questions please use the contact details on your hospital letter, or if you do not have a letter with these contact details please contact our [Patient Advice & Liaison teams](#).

Keep Moving

Reducing your weight and getting active are two of the most powerful things you can do for your body and for your mind. Extra weight places additional strain on your lungs and heart, making it harder for the body to cope with surgery and respond to diseases, including COVID-19

Eating a healthy diet will help you get fit and recover quicker after surgery. Being a healthy weight also reduces your risk of blood clots and wound infections afterwards.

[Visit our weight management page for details of local support available.](#)

Improve Your Health

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected everyone which has caused a lot of people to think more seriously about their health. If you have decided this is the right time for you to make changes check out

www.nhs.uk/live-well and www.nhs.uk/oneyou/

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They can also provide some inspiration for you and your family. The Trust has access to many resources which may help you in making healthier choices, these can be accessed [here](#).

Good Mental Health

Mental health issues will affect 1 in 4 people at some point in their life. Although FHFT does not itself provide urgent mental health specialist services, we are keen that you can access help and support when you need it. Please visit [FHFT website](#) where you can access links to Mental Health support in the local area.

Ongoing health conditions

About 15 million people in England have an ongoing health condition.

Long-term conditions or chronic diseases are conditions for which there is currently no cure, and which are managed with drugs and other treatment, for example: diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, arthritis and hypertension (high blood pressure).

If you are living with one of these ongoing health conditions, there are many ways in which you can [look after yourself](#).