

## Lumbar Epidural Steroid Injection

### What is an epidural steroid injection?

An epidural steroid injection (ESI) is an injection of a small dose of anti-inflammatory medication (called a glucocorticoid) into the lower back to relieve pain in your legs or lower back. The medication is injected into an area of fatty tissue surrounding the spinal nerves called the epidural space. By reducing inflammation, an ESI can help reduce your pain. An ESI can be both a treatment and a way to diagnose a specific nerve root problem when there is a question.

### What are steroids?

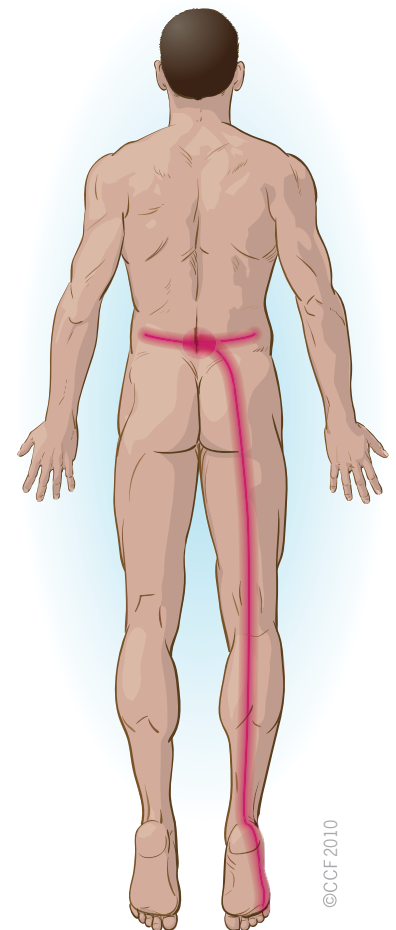
Steroids are a general name for glucocorticoids. The steroid injected is a man-made, synthetic drug that is similar to cortisol, a natural hormone produced in the adrenal gland and brain. Steroids help to reduce pain and inflammation and are used to treat a variety of inflammatory diseases and painful conditions, including lumbar disc herniation.

### Before the procedure

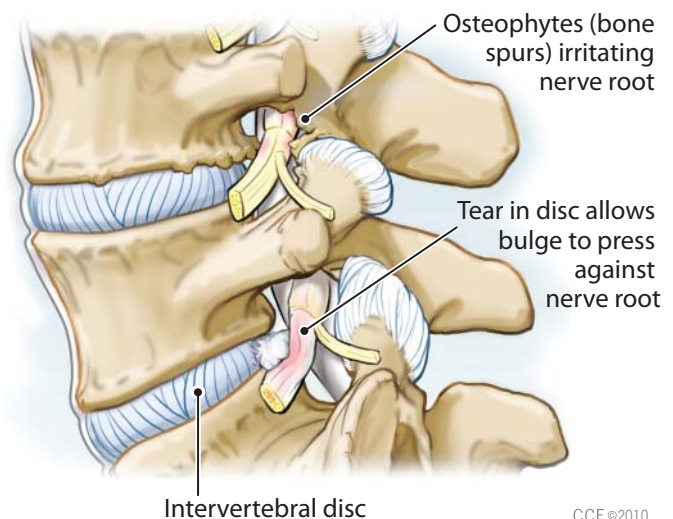
You will meet with a doctor who will review the risks and benefits of the procedure and answer any questions you may have. The potential side effects of an ESI include, but are not limited to:

- Infection
- Bleeding
- Spinal headache
- Temporary leg weakness or numbness

*Some causes of lumbar pain are illustrated here and on the next page.*



*Common lumbar pain sites*

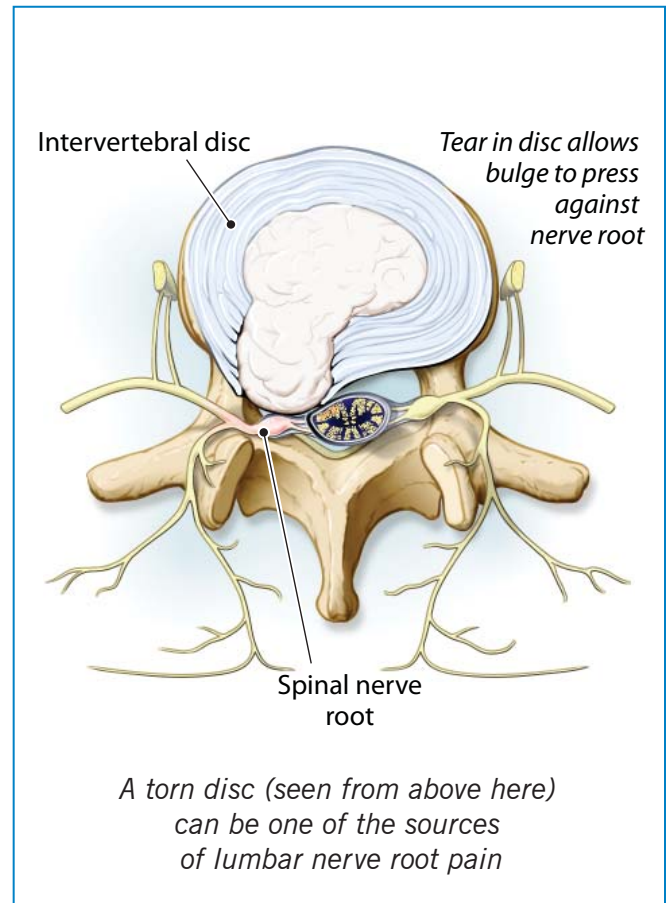


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### Two weeks before the procedure:

- Let us know if you have bleeding disorders, or if you are using blood thinners like aspirin, Coumadin® (warfarin), Plavix® (clopidogrel), Ticlid® (ticlopidine), heparin, Lovenox® (enoxaparin), Fragmin® (dalteparin), Aggrenox® (dipyridamole), or NSAIDS (such as ibuprofen, naproxen, nabumetone, diclofenac, etodolac, indomethacin, ketorolac, meloxicam, piroxicam, ketoprofen, oxaprozin), or especially any herbal blood-thinning medications. The above listed medications may increase risk of bleeding complications.
- If you are taking a blood thinner, please call your primary care physician or cardiologist and ask if it is safe to stop the medication. You will be instructed on how to stop it when it is time for your injection. This will decrease the likelihood of bleeding complications.
- Please honestly review all your medications with us prior to the ESI procedure. Please inform our staff about any medication changes.
- Please let us know if you have had fevers, antibiotic treatment, any illnesses, or hospitalization within the last 4 weeks. You must be healthy on the day of the procedure.



### The day of the procedure

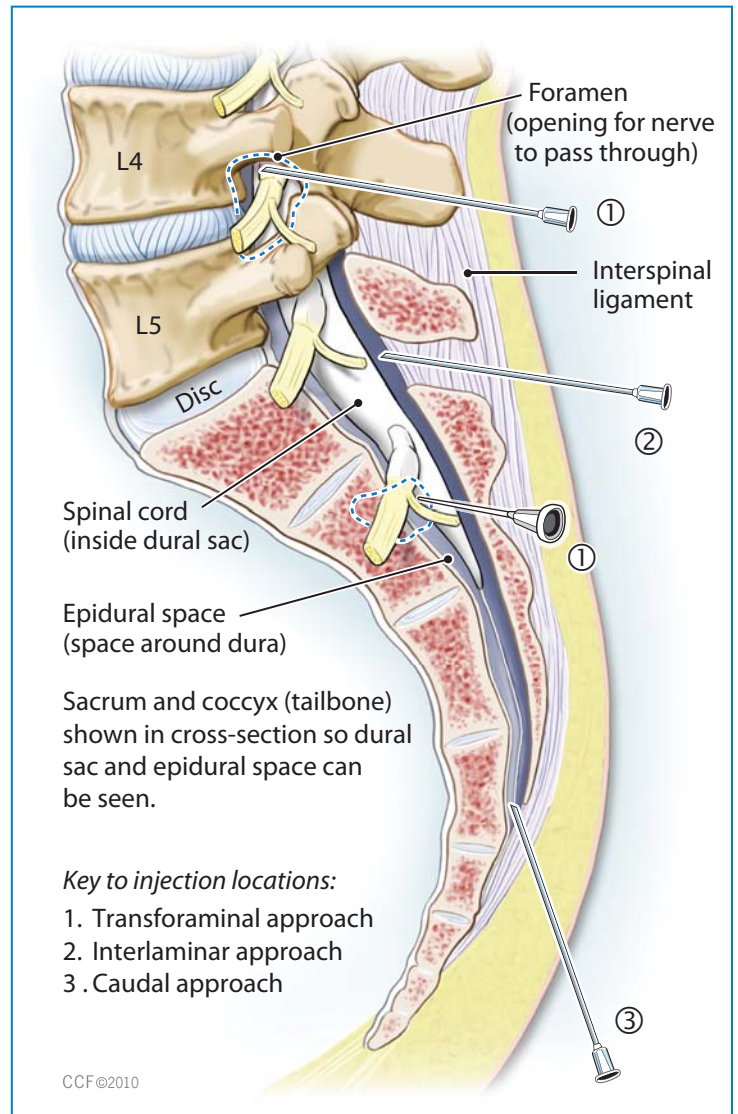
- You will be fully awake during the procedure. Sedation is occasionally used. Discuss with your physician or staff when scheduling the procedure.
- If you have diabetes, your blood sugar numbers may increase. Your primary care physician or our staff will counsel you regarding management. Bring your diabetes medication with you so you can take it after the procedure.
- Continue to take all medications, **ESPECIALLY BLOOD PRESSURE MEDICATIONS**. Bring all your medications with you so you can take them as needed after the procedure. Please note: your blood sugar and blood pressure will need to be within a safe range on the day of the procedure.

### During the procedure

- The procedure will take approximately 10 to 30 minutes.
- You will be lying face down during the procedure.

### After the procedure

- Pain relief may begin immediately after the medication has been injected. You may experience a brief recurrence of your former pain until the anti-inflammatory medication takes effect. Apply ice to the injection site to decrease discomfort.
- A bandage may be placed over the injection site.
- You will rest, lying down, in a recovery room for 15 to 30 minutes.
- A nurse will check your blood pressure and pulse. The nurse will also discuss your discharge instructions with you.
- A responsible adult must drive you home. You must not drive yourself.
- Some people may experience numbness or an inability to walk for a short time after the procedure. If this occurs after your procedure, a wheelchair can be provided to assist you to the car.



*Options for lumbar epidural steroid injections*

### Discharge instructions

- Do not drive or operate machinery for at least 24 hours after the procedure.
- You may eat your normal diet.
- Do not participate in strenuous activity that day.
- You may remove any bandages the morning following the injection.
- You may take a shower. Do not take a bath or sit in a hot tub for 24 hours.
- If you are taking a blood thinner like aspirin, Plavix, Ticlid, Coumadin, heparin, Lovenox, among others, you may re-start it.

## Locations and to schedule epidural steroid injections:

- ***Lutheran Hospital: 216.363.2311, Option 1***
- ***Main Campus: 216.445.9744***
- ***Medina Hospital: 330.721.5879***
- ***RE Jacobs Health Center Spine Institute: 440.695.4000***
- ***Twinsburg Family Health and Surgical Center: 330.888.4000***

## When should I call for help?

If you develop a fever, chills, increasing pain, or if you have new symptoms, please call your physician's office directly. After hours, please call the Cleveland Clinic operator (216.444.2200) and request to speak to the Medical Spine Fellow on call.

*This information is not intended to replace the medical advice of your doctor or health care provider. Please consult your health care provider for advice about a specific medical condition.*



Center for Spine Health  
9500 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44195  
216.636.5860 or 866.588.2264  
[clevelandclinic.org/spine](http://clevelandclinic.org/spine)