

Pain Management – Epidural Injection

Introduction

"Epidural" refers to the space surrounding the outer protective covering of the spinal cord.

For some people, an injection into the epidural space can help to relieve back pain or sciatic pain (shooting pain from the back down one or both legs) at least in the short term. This period of pain relief may allow them to become more active. Keeping active is crucial to recovery from chronic back pain.

An epidural injection for chronic back pain consists of a steroid, a local anaesthetic or a combination of the two. These drugs are put into the epidural space using a special needle. The position of the injection depends on the spinal nerve responsible for the pain. This is usually in the lumbar region of the back (below the level of your lowest rib).

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 injection is routinely performed as a day case, so in most cases, does not require an overnight stay in hospital. You will be awake during the procedure, but you may be offered a sedative to ensure that you are relaxed and comfortable. Your consultant will explain the benefits of having an epidural injection and discuss the associated risks and alternatives to the treatment.

If you normally take medicine (eg tablets for blood pressure), continue to take them as usual unless your consultant specifically tells you not to. If you are unsure about taking your medication, please contact the hospital. On arrival at the hospital, you will be asked some questions regarding your medical history and previous experience of hospital treatment. Before you come into hospital, you will be asked to follow some instructions:

- Have a bath or shower at home on the day of your admission.
- Remove any make-up, nail varnish and jewellery. Rings and earrings that you would prefer not to remove can usually be covered with sticky tape.
- Follow the fasting instructions in your admission confirmation letter. Typically, you must not eat or drink for about six hours before a general anaesthetic or sedation. However, some anaesthetics allow occasional sips of water until 2 hours beforehand.

When you arrive at the hospital, a nurse will explain how you will be cared for during your stay. This is a good time to ask about anything else you need to know.

It is important that while you are waiting for your surgery you remain as active and as medically fit as possible. If you have any long-standing conditions such as high blood pressure you should get this reviewed at your GP surgery to make sure it remains well controlled. This will also help prevent any unnecessary delays when you come for your pre-operative assessment. Maintaining a well-balanced diet is also important, as is reducing any excessive weight that

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may be impacting on your general health. If you are a current smoker it would be advisable to seek support to help with stopping, advice can be found at your local pharmacy or Doctor's surgery.

Find out your BMI

Follow this link to the [NHS BMI Calculator](#)

BMI of 25+

If you have a Body Mass Index of 25 or higher the [Better Health Let's Do This – Lose Weight](#) website provides online support to help you lose weight and includes access to the NHS 12 week weight loss plan.

The NHS 12 week fitness plan will support your weight loss plan as well as improve your health. This is aimed at beginners and will help get you into the habit of regular exercise over the course of the programme. It is structured but flexible enough to allow you to fit the exercise sessions around your other weekly commitments.

Information and advice on healthy eating and becoming more active is available from:

- [One You Eat Better \(website\)](#) - includes Easy Meals app for healthy meals and the Change4Life Food Scanner to help reduce levels of sugar in your diet
- [Better Health - Get Active \(website\)](#) - includes tips on getting active for all, including the downloadable Active 10 app, as well as tailored advice for those living with a long-term condition.

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

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