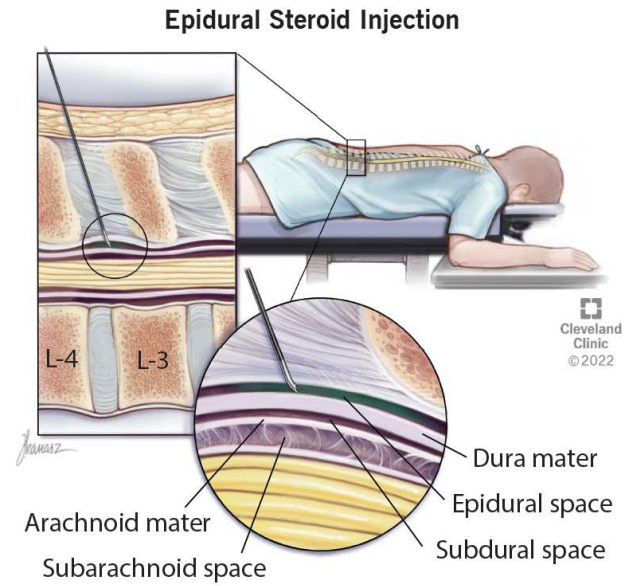




Epidural Steroid Injection (ESI)

An epidural steroid injection (ESI) is an injection of anti-inflammatory medicine — a steroid or corticosteroid — into the space around your spinal nerves known as the epidural space to treat pain caused by irritation and inflammation of spinal nerve roots. Healthcare providers use ESI injections as a chronic pain management tool. It can help relieve neck, arm, back and leg pain caused by inflamed spinal nerves due to certain conditions or injuries. Pain relief from an ESI may last for several days or months.



What will I experience during my ESI injection?

You'll likely experience a minor pinch when your provider injects the local anesthetic to numb the area before your ESI injection. You may not feel anything during the ESI injection, or you may feel the following:

- Pressure
- A burning sensation
- Tingling
- Momentary pain

If you have any discomfort during the injection, it usually disappears once the injection is finished.

If you feel intense, sharp pain during or after your ESI injection, tell your provider immediately.

What should I expect after my ESI injection?

After your injection, you may feel some discomfort where your healthcare provider inserted the needle. This is normal and should only last a few hours. Your provider may tell you to take it easy and minimize your activity level for the rest of the day. Your pain may become worse for two to three days after your ESI before it begins to improve. Epidural steroid injections start working within two to seven days, and the pain relief can last several days or longer.

What are the side effects of ESI injections?

Side effects of ESIs include:

- You may experience a temporary increase in pain before the steroid medication starts working.
- You may have tenderness and/or bruising at the site of your injection.

- If your provider uses fluoroscopy for imaging guidance, there will be minimal low-level radiation exposure due to the X-rays. Fluoroscopy x-rays may be harmful to a developing fetus. It's essential to tell your healthcare provider if you're pregnant or might be pregnant before you undergo the procedure.
- If you have diabetes, an epidural steroid injection will likely cause high blood sugar (hyperglycemia). This could last for hours or even days.
- If you have glaucoma, an ESI may temporarily increase your blood pressure and eye pressure.

What are the advantages of epidural steroid injections?

The advantages of epidural steroid injections include:

- You'll likely experience temporary pain relief. Some people experience long-term pain relief.
- You'll likely have a better quality of life and an improved ability to do daily activities without the restrictions previously caused by pain.
- Epidural steroid injections may provide diagnostic information on the origin of your pain. This is often helpful in people who have more than one possible cause of pain.
- Epidural steroid injections may reduce the need for more invasive procedures for pain management.

What are the risks and possible complications of epidural steroid injections?

Epidural steroid injections are usually safe, but there are risks of certain side effects and complications.

Although rare, risks and complications that apply to ESI injections include:

- Low blood pressure, which can make you feel lightheaded.
- Experiencing a severe headache caused by spinal fluid leakage. Less than 1% of people experience this side effect.
- Infection from the epidural procedure, such as an epidural abscess, discitis, osteomyelitis or meningitis.
- Having a negative reaction to the medications, such as hot flashes or a rash.
- Experiencing bleeding if a blood vessel is accidentally damaged during the injection, which could cause a hematoma or a blood clot to form.
- Having damage to the nerves at the injection site.
- Temporarily losing the ability to regulate your bladder and bowels. You might need a catheter (a small tube) in your bladder to help you urinate.
- Getting ESI injections too often or receiving higher doses of steroid medication may weaken the bones of your spine or nearby muscles. Because of this, most healthcare providers limit people to 2 to 3 ESIs per year.

Are epidural steroid injections covered by insurance?

All medical plans are different in terms of what is a covered benefit, please check with your plan directly in regards to covered services and patient eligibility and benefits.

- We will check with your insurance if authorization for this procedure is required. This does not mean it is a covered benefit, you will need to check with your insurance plan directly to confirm covered services and eligibility of benefits.