

What is a Lumbar Epidural Steroid Injection?

A lumbar epidural steroid injection is a treatment for low back pain caused by inflammation. The procedure places anesthetic and steroid medicine to the inflamed tissues near the spine. The procedure needs to be done by a board-certified specialist.

What to expect at your appointment

First, Dr. Franiak will meet with you and discuss your specific case, and review any imaging, such as your X-rays, or MRI. He will discuss with you what is the most likely cause of your pain, and why a LESI may be helpful. He will discuss with you benefits and risks of the procedure. The procedure is relatively quick, it usually takes less than 15' for the procedure itself. You can expect to be in our office for about an hour or so for your entire appointment. At our main office, we have a comfortable, state-of-the-art procedure room with new equipment. LESI procedures are performed using sterile surgical technique, under a C-arm X-ray machine to obtain live imaging of the spine. Dr. Franiak and the nurse will talk to you through the procedure. You can ask questions at any time. The patient lies on their belly. The area is scrubbed using some surgical soap. The area is then numbed using local anesthetic. This feels like a "pinch". Dr. Franiak is very skilled at local anesthesia (numbing of the area). A needle is placed to the proper area of the spine and a small amount of contrast dye is used to check placement with the X-ray machine. Then the numbing medicine and steroid is injected. Then, the nurse or assistant can wipe off the soap, and place a band-aid, if needed. The patient is able to sit up and return to their room immediately following the procedure.

How Painful is this procedure?

Most patients are pleasantly surprised and tell us the procedure was much LESS painful than they anticipated. You will not likely need strong pain medicine due to the procedure. Patients are advised to take it easy the day of the procedure, avoiding vigorous activity. Typically, if there is discomfort, patients do well with taking an over-the-counter pain medicine such as Ibuprofen, or Advil, or Tylenol. Gel ice packs can be helpful the day after the procedure.

When will I get relief from the pain?

It does take the steroid a few days to provide benefit. Typically within 3 to 7 days patients will experience the effects of the steroid. We allow about two weeks to assess the full benefit.

How long will it last?

Each case is unique, however, ideally, if the inflammation is significantly reduced, the nerves will heal and the pain will resolve. The pain may not return unless (or until) it gets inflamed again. Dr. Franiak can discuss with you your specific case, prognosis, and options for treatment.