

# Epidural Steroid Injection (ESI)

## Overview

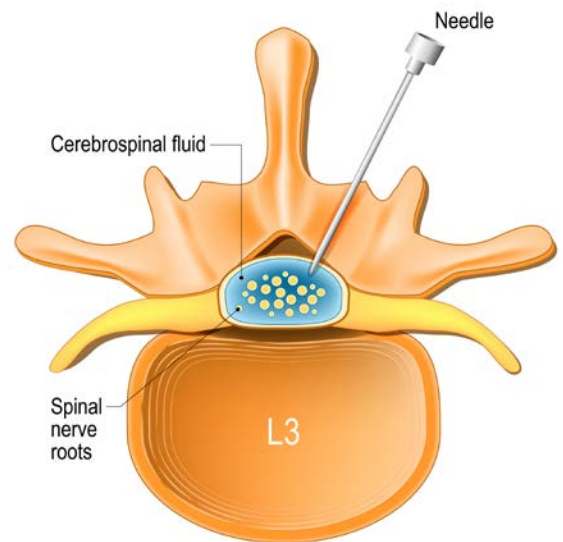
This procedure is performed to relieve radiating pain. Steroid medication can reduce the swelling and inflammation caused by spinal conditions. In some cases, it may be necessary to repeat the procedure as many as three times to get the full benefits. Many patients get significant relief from only one or two injections.

## Fluoroscopic guidance

A fluoroscope assists the physician in locating the appropriate vertebra and nerve root. A local anesthetic is used to numb the skin.

## The procedure

- **Tissue anesthetized:** All of the tissue down to the surface of the vertebra bone is anesthetized.
- **Larger needle inserted:** The physician slides a thicker needle through the anesthetized tract.
- **Needle guided:** Using the fluoroscope for guidance, the physician slides the needle toward the epidural space.
- **Contrast dye detected:** A contrast solution is injected. The physician uses the fluoroscope to see the painful areas and to confirm the correct location of the needle tip.
- **Steroid injected:** A steroid-anesthetics mix is injected into the epidural space, bathing the painful nerve root with medication.



## Possible risks and complications of Lumbar ESI

- Spinal headache
- Bruising
- Bleeding (rare)
- Infection (rare)

## During your procedure

The injection takes just a few minutes, however, additional time is needed to prepare.

- Medication will be given before the injection to help you relax.
- Monitoring devices may be attached to your chest/side. These devices measure your heart rate, breathing and blood pressure.
- You lie on your stomach/side depending on the injection you are receiving. The area is cleaned and may be covered with sterile towels.
- Medicine is given to numb the skin near the injection site.
- If fluoroscopy (x-ray imaging) is used, contrast dye may be injected into your back. This will provide the physician with a better image.
- A local anesthetic (for numbing), steroids (for reducing inflammation) or both are injected into the epidural space.

## After the procedure

You will spend up to 30 minutes in a recovery area. Before going home, you may be asked to fill out a survey about your pain.

## Recovery at home

You do not need to stay in bed when you get home. In fact, it is best to walk around if you are up to it. Just be careful you are not being too active. Even if you feel better right away, avoid activities that may strain your back. Be sure to follow up on all treatment with your doctor.

## What to expect

Some patients feel increased pain at first, which usually goes away within a few days. You may also have headaches or trouble sleeping. These should also go away within a few days.

An injection to reduce inflammation takes a day or two to work. At first, you may experience even more pain. An injection to help locate the source of pain may only give brief pain relief. Later, you will feel the same as you did before the injection.

## Tips for recovery

Whether you were injected for pain relief or a diagnosis, these tips will help you recover:

- Take walks when you feel up to it.
- Rest if needed but be sure to get up after sitting for a half hour.
- Don't exercise vigorously.
- Return to work or other activities when your doctor says you are ready.

## When to call your doctor

Call right away if you notice any of the following symptoms:

- Severe pain or headache.
- Loss of bladder or bowel control.
- Fever or chills.
- Redness or swelling around the injection site.