

Lumbar Transforaminal Epidural Steroid Injection (TFESI)

Overview

This injection procedure is performed to relieve low back and radiating leg pain. Steroid medication can reduce the swelling and inflammation caused by spinal conditions such as spinal stenosis, radiculopathy, sciatica and herniated discs.

Fluoroscopic guidance

The patient lies face down. A cushion is placed under the stomach area, which provides comfort and flexes the back. In this position, the spine opens and allows for easier access to the epidural space. A fluoroscope assists the physician in locating the appropriate lumbar vertebra and nerve root. A local anesthetic is used to numb the skin.

The procedure

- **Tissue anesthetized:** All the tissue down to the surface of the vertebral transverse process is anesthetized.
- **Needle insertion:** The physician slides a thin, bent needle with a lightly curved point through the anesthetized tract.
- **Foraminal space accessed:** With the aid of the fluoroscope, the physician carefully guides the needle into the foraminal space near the nerve root.
- **Contrast dye injected:** The physician injects a contrast solution and uses the fluoroscope to see the painful areas and confirm the correct location of the needle tip.
- **Steroid injection:** A steroid mix is injected into the foraminal epidural space, bathing the painful nerve root with soothing medication. At the physician's discretion, anesthetics may be included in the injection mix.

End of procedure

The needle is removed and a small Band-Aid is used to cover the tiny needle surface wound. In some cases, it may be necessary to repeat the procedure as many as three times to provide the full benefit of the medication. However, many patients feel significant relief from only one or two injections.

