

## PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

### Epidural Injections

#### WHAT IS AN EPIDURAL INJECTION?

An epidural injection is given into the epidural space of the spine to provide temporary or prolonged relief from pain or inflammation around the spinal nerve roots. X-ray guidance is used to localise the needle in exactly the right position to ensure maximum benefit from the injection.

#### WHY IS AN EPIDURAL INJECTION DONE?

An epidural injection may be performed to alleviate pain caused by a bulging disc, degeneration of the spine with age, and injuries to the vertebrae and surrounding tissue.

#### PREPARATION FOR NERVE BLOCK

- In the interests of safety and security please do not bring valuables with you on the day of the procedure.
- It is advisable to arrange to take the day of the procedure off work.
- You must organize for a responsible adult to accompany you home. This person must collect you from the Radiology Department after the procedure is finished. Failure to adhere to this will result in the procedure being cancelled for safety reasons. Women of childbearing age should have the procedure done within the first 10 days of their menstrual cycle.

#### MEDICATION (TABLETS)

- Patients may take routine tablets (e.g. blood pressure or diabetic tablets etc) on the day of the procedure. Patients should not take pain killing tablets or anti-inflammatory tablets the day of their procedure as these may lessen your usual pain. These medicines can be restarted after the procedure is completed, if needed.
- However if you take anti-clotting tablets (e.g. aspirin, plavix warfarin) you should inform your doctor prior to the procedure and special advice will be given regarding these tablets.
- If you are feeling unwell, i.e. have the flu, infection, skin infection or an antibiotic for any reason on the appointment day or preceding days, please inform your doctor as the procedure may not be performed in such circumstances and will have to be rescheduled.

#### RISKS

- As with every procedure in medicine there is a risk of complication but we ensure that all risks are kept to a minimum.
- The risks associated with this procedure are rare but can include complications such as infection, bleeding, headache, transient numbness of the lower limbs (short term). Should any of these complications arise the appropriate treatment will be initiated.

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- Other risks can include localized bruising, headache (the incidence of headache is approximately one in one hundred patients and is usually self-limiting).
- Approximately one in three people who receive an anti-inflammatory medication develop facial flushing and this will subside without treatment within three to four days.
- Initially, following the injection, the pain may be intensified for the first couple of days, and then it should subside and provide some pain relief.
- The degree of pain relief cannot be predicted and some patients obtain no benefit at all

### **CONSENT**

The doctor performing the procedure will ask you to sign a consent form, which is to ensure that you understand the procedure, and allow for answering any questions you may have. A small amount of medical radiation is used for localization purposes. The benefit of the procedure should outweigh any small radiation risk.

### **WHO WILL PERFORM THE PROCEDURE?**

The procedure will be carried out in the x-ray department by a consultant radiologist (x-ray doctor) accompanied by a nurse and a radiographer.

### **WHAT DOES THE PROCEDURE INVOLVE?**

- You may be asked to change into a gown before the procedure depending on the location of your injection.
- You will be positioned on the x-ray table to allow the doctor access to the site.
- The injection site will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution.
- A sterile drape will then be placed over the injection site.
- The radiologist will numb the area with an injection of local anaesthetic.
- Once the area is numb, the doctor will use the x-ray equipment to localise the needle.
- When the needle is positioned the doctor will slowly inject the medication.
- More than one injection may be required depending on how large an area needs to be covered.
- The injection usually takes only minutes to administer.
- A nurse will stay with you throughout the procedure.
- It is important to stay very still while the injection is performed.
- Once the injection is performed, a dressing is then applied to the site which can be removed the following morning.

### **DURING AND AFTER THE PROCEDURE**

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- You may experience pressure when the medication is being injected. This will subside once the injection is complete. You may also feel “pins and needles” in your legs after the injection.
- You should **take it easy** for the rest of the day, resuming normal activities after 24 hours.
- Following the procedure you must not drive a car, operate machinery or drink alcohol until the next day.
- The radiology nurse will give you a card with contact information should you have any worries, feel unwell or suffer complications following your injections. If you need to attend your General Practitioner (GP) or Accident and Emergency (A&E) Department, please inform the doctor that you have had a nerve block injection performed.

### RESULTS

A report will be sent to your referring doctor detailing the injection done. If you are still experiencing pain two weeks later, please contact your referring doctor where an appointment for a follow up injection can be made.