

# Learning About Lumbar Epidural Steroid Injections



## What is a lumbar epidural steroid injection?

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A lumbar epidural injection is a shot into the epidural space—the area in your back around the spinal cord. The shot may help reduce pain, tingling, or numbness in your back, buttock, or leg. The shot may have a steroid to reduce pain and swelling and a local anesthetic to numb nerves.

## How is a lumbar epidural steroid injection done?

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The doctor may use an imaging test before or during your injection. This can be an MRI, a CT scan, or an X-ray. These tests can show where your nerve problems are.

After finding the right spot, the doctor may inject a numbing medicine into the skin where you will get the steroid injection. Then the needle for the steroid is put into the numbed area. You may feel some pressure. You could feel some stinging or burning during the injection.

## How long does an epidural steroid injection take?

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The procedure will take 5 to 15 minutes. You will go home about an hour later.

## What can you expect after a lumbar epidural steroid injection?

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If your injection had local anesthetic and a steroid, your legs may feel heavy or numb right after. You will probably be able to walk. But you may need to be extra careful. Take care not to lose your balance, and be sure to follow your doctor's instructions.

If your injection contained local anesthetic, you may feel better right away. But this pain relief will last only a few hours. Your pain will probably return. This is because the steroids have not started working yet. Before the steroids start to work, your back may be sore for a few days.

These injections don't always work. When they do, it takes 1 to 5 days. This pain relief can last for several

days to a few months or longer.

You may want to do less than normal for a few days. But you may also be able to return to your daily routine.

Some people are dizzy or feel sick to their stomach after getting this injection. These symptoms usually don't last very long.

If your pain is better, you may be able to keep doing your normal activities or physical therapy. But try not to overdo it, even if your back pain has improved a lot. If your pain is only a little better or if it comes back, your doctor may recommend another injection in a few weeks. If your pain has not changed, talk to your doctor about other treatment choices.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

## Where can you learn more?

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Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

Enter **H162** in the search box to learn more about "**Learning About Lumbar Epidural Steroid Injections**".

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