



Your 9 Most Commonly Asked Questions About Lumbar Epidural Injections

If you suffer from chronic back and leg pain, lumbar epidural injections may be able to help you.

Lumbar epidural injections are a simple, proven procedure with decades of success.

However, many patients with chronic back and leg pain may not fully understand what it entails.

I've written this article to help you understand not only what the injection is but also possible side effects and other important details.

This article will answer some of the most common questions people have regarding the procedure.



1. What are lumbar epidural injections?

In a nutshell, a lumbar epidural injection is an injection of a combination of two chemicals:

- a local anesthetic
- a steroid medication

Both are simultaneously injected directly into the space that surrounds your spinal cord and nerve roots.

The two parts of the injection work together to reduce your pain.

A “local anesthetic” is an injection of medicine that numbs a small area of your body. The steroid medication helps reduce swelling and inflammation.

Both parts of the injection, the numbing effect, and the reduction of swelling have the effect of reducing your pain.

2. How long do epidural injections last for back pain?

If you are recovering a disk herniation in your back, one such injection may – *may* – help you recover completely, although results vary from patient to patient.

For patients with chronic pain, studies have shown that one epidural injection can provide pain relief from three to six months.

Again, bear in mind that every person is different, and results cannot be guaranteed.

3. How long does it take for an epidural steroid injection to take effect?

The injection sometimes produces immediate, though temporary, relief. This is due to the local anesthetic.

Think of getting a shot of nonvaccine from your dentist. Because the part of your mouth that received the injection is now numb, you feel no discomfort.

As you know from visiting the dentist, this part will wear off soon after.

The pain relief from the steroid medication takes longer to begin working. Since each patient's condition is different, results cannot be definitively predicted.

However, the average response in most patients is that the steroid medication in the injection will take effect in roughly two to seven days after the injection.

4. What are the side effects of epidural steroid injections?

The good news is that most side effects from the injection are quite minor.

Possible common side effects may include:

- Dizziness
- Headaches
- Mild nausea
- Feeling of warmth and redness in your face
- Fainting

A quick note about fainting. Fainting may be caused by a sudden decrease and blood pressure.

The change in blood pressure is often caused by anxiety about the procedure itself.

Since the possibility of fainting is linked to feelings of anxiety, you may want to practice some simple stress management techniques in preparation for the injection.

There are several simple breathing or guided imagery techniques available at [Healthline](#). You can check out 16 easy methods [HERE](#).



5. How long should you rest after an epidural?

Because your limbs may be numb after the injection, you'll want to rest at least until your feeling returns. This will often take a few hours.

However, every person's definition of 'rest' is different.

If your idea of rest means you're not going to do your regular household chores and run errands, it's advisable to wait at least a full day.

Regardless of how long you choose to rest, you'll want to wait at least twelve hours before driving.

This is a safety precaution due to the numbness you may experience in your arms and legs, which may affect your reaction time when driving.



6. How Can You Help Your Back After an Epidural Injection?

Since you may not feel the effects of the steroid medication for several days after your injection, there are some simple things you can do to feel better.

- **Take a warm bath.** The warm water will help relax any tension in your muscles.
- **Use a heating pad or a cold pack on the sensitive area.**
- **Try many of the same Healthline [relaxation techniques](#).** They are effective not only for quieting the mind but also for relaxing muscles.



7. Can you walk after an epidural for back pain?

Most medical experts agree you won't be walking immediately after your injection. The good news is that it's not a long wait.

You'll typically be asked to rest while the medical team monitors you from 15 minutes to half an hour after the injection.

Even after you are cleared to walk, you'll want to be extremely cautious.

Since you'll likely be experiencing numbness in your limbs, your ability to walk will be greatly affected.

You may be unsteady, so it's best to have a family member come with you.

They can help support you as you make your way out of the building and to your transportation home.



8. How can I strengthen my back after an epidural?

You'll want your exercise routine to consist of a combination of stretching, extremely low impact movements, and light strength exercises.

Some simple exercises to consider include:

- Slow-paced walking
- Normal or reduced housework
- [Wall squats](#)
- [Side-lying leg lifts](#)
- [Bird dog position](#)

To be fair, this is not intended to be a thorough list.

There are dozens of possibilities, but these few examples will give you an idea of the kind of movements you can use to strengthen your back without straining it.

Check with your medical team for additional suggestions and guidelines after your procedure.

9. Will an epidural injection lower the discomfort of a pinched nerve?

Yes, such injections are highly effective in relieving the pain associated with a pinched nerve.

For context, a pinched nerve is when a spinal nerve root is pinched or compressed, hence the name.

Because the nerves are pinched, they are often inflamed. The steroid medication in the injection helps reduce swelling and inflammation, reducing the cause of the pain.

We're Here to Help

I hope this article has helped answer many of the questions you may have had when considering whether lumbar epidural injections are right for you.

Here at **Dr. Capicotto's office, we specialize in helping people take back control of their lives!** We'd love to help you lower back or leg pain and regain your mobility and comfort.

For a [FREE consultation](#) and more information, please contact us today.