

# Epidural Corticosteroid Injection Q & A



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## 1. *What is Epidural Cortisone or Epidural Steroid Injection (ESI)?*

ESI is a procedure that places a small amount of powerful anti-inflammatory steroid medication, cortisone, around inflamed spinal nerves, in the epidural space. It reduces the swelling, irritation, and pain caused by the pinched nerves.

## 2. *Why is ESI helpful?*

ESI is used to treat pain caused by inflammation of the spine that may involve herniated discs, pinched nerves, and injured soft and connective tissues.

## 3. *Is ESI similar to a labor epidural?*

ESI and labor epidurals are similar, but different. A labor epidural uses anesthetic while ESI uses corticosteroid (*i.e.*: *Bethamethasone*). An ESI is performed with a smaller needle with the patient lying flat on the abdomen. An x-ray machine (Fluoroscopy) is used to precisely place the needle.

## 4. *How many injections will I need?*

Depending on your response to the initial injection, we may repeat the ESI a second or third time, or change the approach. This can then be repeated in the future, or later in life, if the problem returns.

## 5. *Does cortisone just cover up my pain? Will I injure myself without knowing?*

Cortisone is neither a pain medication nor an anesthetic. It is an anti-inflammatory drug. It is a compound similar to what the body normally produces at times of stress, except longer-

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lasting. Cortisone helps the body recover. All of your faculties and sensations will remain intact, thus you will not injure yourself without knowing.

**6. *Is steroid bad for you?***

Complications occurring with ESI are rare. Cortisone is a steroid, but it is not the performance-enhancing anabolic steroid you've heard so much about. Cortisone is more likely to cause problems when it is used chronically, such as for treating rheumatoid arthritis or for asthma. A short series of ESIs rarely causes problems.

**7. *Is ESI used only for back and leg pain?***

ESI can be used to treat nerves along the entire spine but low back and neck are the most common locations for the procedure.

**8. *Do you perform ESIs under X-ray?***

Precise medication delivery to the injured areas is essential for good response. Training and equipment do affect how some physicians in the community practice. Our specially designed interventional suites, with the most advanced GE C-arm and multi-directional x-ray tables, set the standard. Our facility is fully accredited by AAAHC and Medicare for meeting high quality standards.

**9. *Will the injection hurt? What if I am afraid of needles?***

With local anesthesia, most patients find ESI easily tolerated. A sedative is rarely needed. However, if a patient is anxious or is unusually fearful of needles, a sedative can be given and the injection will be performed at an outside facility.