



Epidural Injections

Welcome to the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital (ROH).
For further information please visit www.roh.nhs.uk

What is an epidural injection?

An epidural is an injection into the epidural space, which is the area around the spinal nerves.

Why do I need to have the injection?

The injection is done to relieve pain and inflammation around the nerve or structures in the epidural space. It is used to help leg pain (sciatica) and paraesthesia (pins and needles) and is sometimes used for back pain.

Who does the procedure?

The injection is usually carried out by a doctor in the Injection Room on the Admissions and Day Case Unit (ADCU). They may use an X-ray machine to guide the injection.

What is injected?

The injection consists of an anti-inflammatory drug (corticosteroid) and sometimes may also include a local anaesthetic.

The local anaesthetic will be responsible for any immediate relief of symptoms.

When this wears off the pain may return before the benefits of the anti-inflammatory are felt.

The anti-inflammatory drug may take up to 6 weeks to work.

Important information

Before your injection you must inform the ADCU staff if you are:

- pregnant or may be pregnant,
- diabetic,
- feel unwell,
- have an infection, cold or persistent cough,
- have any allergies,
- taking any of the following medication: **Antibiotics, Aspirin, Warfarin** or **Clopidogrel** or other tablets taken to thin the blood (some of these may need to be stopped some days before).

Failure to do so may result in your procedure being cancelled on the day.

How effective is the injection?

For many people epidurals produce noticeable improvements in symptoms. However they do not work for everyone and their effectiveness cannot be predicted. The effects can last for weeks, months or even years and epidurals can be repeated if symptoms return.

What are the risks of this procedure?

- Infection.
- Damage to small veins when the needle is inserted.

- Bleeding causing local bruising or bleeding around the nerve.
- Damage to the lining around the nerve (Dural puncture) which may cause a severe headache for a few days.
- Nerve damage.
- Adverse reaction to injection which may be mild or life threatening (anaphylaxis).
- Urinary complications (incontinence or difficulty emptying your bladder).
- If you are diabetic then the injection may raise your glucose levels. Glucose levels should be monitored for up to 1 month after your injection. If there are any changes in diabetic symptoms then patients should consult their GP.
- Facial flushing for a few days.
- Temporary discomfort for a few days after your injection.
- For females - temporary alteration of your menstrual cycle.

Please note
The risk of complications with this procedure are small.

Please discuss any concerns with the clinician looking after you.

On the day of your procedure

- Please arrive at ADCU no more than 10 minutes before your appointment time as the waiting area is limited.
- If you are brought in by a relative or friend, they can accompany you to the admission reception, where you will be booked in and handed in to the care of the ADCU team. Please ensure your relative or friend is aware that there is waiting space for **patients only** in ADCU.
- Relatives/friends wishing to stay on site are kindly asked to leave the Admissions Unit and are welcome to use the restaurant facilities in the main hospital building. Long stay parking is available at Gate a and C.

- We ask for only **one nominated relative/friend** to contact us for updates (e.g. progress, expected discharge time). Relatives are free to contact **ADCU** for updates on **0121 685 4080**.
- We have in excess of 40 patients attending this unit per day and would welcome your co-operation. Thank you.
- Take any medication as normal unless advised otherwise. Bring a list of your tablets with you.
- You can eat and drink normally before arriving although you won't be offered anything once admitted. This is to aid your comfort during the procedure and is an additional safety measure in case of complications.
- You will be admitted to ADCU and assessed by a nurse. This is to make sure you are fit and ready for the epidural. You will have the opportunity to ask any questions at this stage.
- The Doctor carrying out your epidural will also see you before you have the procedure.
- As your epidural is being carried out as a day case you will normally be admitted for half a day. You may be asked to stay overnight but this is unusual.

What will happen after the epidural?

You will be asked to rest on a bed/trolley for about an hour after the epidural, during which time you will be monitored by the nursing staff who will check your:

- Blood pressure
- Injection site

Once you have passed urine you will be able to make arrangements for going home.

Please note:
You must not drive yourself home or use public transport.

For your own well being we advise that you are collected by a relative or friend. Hospital transport can only be booked if there is a medical need and you meet the set criteria.

Back at home

It is important that you take things easy for the rest of the day. Do not do any excessive exercise or heavy work for the first few days.

If a dressing is in place, remove the dressing the morning following your procedure.

Continue to take your pain relief tablets until you notice an improvement in your symptoms.

Follow up appointment

Need for a follow up appointment will be discussed before you are discharged.

Can't make your appointment?

If for any reason you cannot make your appointment you must let the ADCU scheduled care coordinator know as soon as possible.

You can contact the department on 0121 685 4334

Mon-Fri 8.30am to 4.00pm

This will enable the vacant appointment to be filled by someone else. Your appointment will not be automatically re-booked unless you call to tell us you are not coming.

Who do I contact if I have any problems following the procedure?

From 9am – 5pm you can either speak to a nurse on the ADCU on 0121 685 4080 or contact the Secretary for the clinician you are under. Outside these hours contact the 'bleep holder' through switchboard at the ROH (0121 685 4000).

Patient Support

Our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) offers help, support and advice to patients, their relative, friends and carers. PALS can help answer questions you have about hospital services; respond to problems or concerns; and welcome your suggestions or comments, both positive and negative. PALS can be contacted by phone, Monday to Friday, 8.30am and 4.30pm. See contact details below.

Patient Experience

As a hospital we are committed to listening to the views of our patients and using the feedback to inform service improvement plans. You may be asked to complete a number of surveys at different stages during your treatment. Please help us by completing the questionnaires. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Contact Numbers

PALS	0121 685 4128
ADCU Scheduled Care Coordinator	0121 685 4334
ADCU	0121 685 4080