

NEUROLOGICAL SURGERY ASSOCIATES, P.C.
513 Brookwood Blvd, Suite 372
Birmingham, AL 35209
(205) 949-1800

Swaid N. Swaid, M.D., F.A.C.S.

EPIDURAL PAIN BLOCKS

WHAT IS AN EPIDURAL PAIN BLOCK

A pain block is an injection of medication into the epidural space (space surrounding the spinal nerve roots). The injection consists of an analgesic for pain control, and an anti-inflammatory and steroid to help reduce inflammation causing irritation of the nerve. The blocks are administered by an anesthesiologist who is skilled in performing this procedure. A patient usually receives a series of three shots, one every two weeks. Each block generally gives a two week coverage of medication, and inflammation normally takes about six weeks to resolve. By scheduling the blocks in this manner, the medication will be effective for a six week period.

SCHEDULING

The blocks will be scheduled through our office. If authorization is required by your insurance company, we will take the necessary steps to complete this. Treatment covered under Workmen's Compensation must be approved by the adjuster assigned to the case before scheduling the blocks. This will also be done through our office. If you change insurance coverage during the course of your treatment with the epidural blocks, please contact our office. If proper authorization is not obtained your insurance company may deny payment for the procedure. On occasion a patient finds it necessary to reschedule a block for a different date. If this is done, please contact our office with this change so proper documentation can be made on your chart and if necessary with your insurance company.

PREPARATION

Do not eat or drink anything for at least six hours before your scheduled block time. Bring someone to drive you home after the procedure. Take morning medicine with a sip of water, except insulin, blood thinner and diuretics. If you are on a blood thinner this must be stopped for 5 days before the block is performed.

PROCEDURE

You will be given a light sedation before your block, and a local anesthetic may be administered in the area of the injection. The anesthesiologist will explain the procedure, benefits, possible risks and complications before beginning the block. The block will take about thirty minutes to perform, and you will be kept at observation for a short period of time following the block. If you have any complications after being discharged, call the anesthesiologist at the number provided.

FOLLOW-UP

After being discharged go home and relax the rest of the day. You may return to nonstrenuous normal activities the day following your block. It is recommended that you do no heavy lifting, bending, stretching, pulling or pushing, nor any strenuous, jarring activities (including many sports) during the six weeks of treatment. This may cause more irritation to the area resulting in a slower healing process. If you do not have improvement of your symptoms after the first block, do not be discouraged. Many times it takes two or three blocks before the inflammation resolves enough to give you pain relief. The anesthesiologist performing the block will monitor your progress and keep us informed. At the completion of your blocks, if you are significantly better or your symptoms have resolved, there will be no need for a follow-up visit with our office. If the pain persists following the blocks, please call our office for further instructions and recommendations.