

## **Epidural/Caudal injection information**

### *Why am I having an epidural injection?*

Your doctor considers that the pattern of pain you have may be related to inflammation and/or pressure on the nerves coming from your spine to your limbs. Irritation of these nerves may cause pain in the immediate area or referred pain in other areas. Depending on which nerves are affected this may occur in your neck, chest, back, hip, buttocks or legs. By giving you this injection the doctor will be able to tell whether or not this is the source of your pain. In addition you may experience a prolonged period of pain relief.

### *What is an epidural injection?*

The procedure involves an injection of a local anaesthetic (a numbing medicine) and an anti-inflammatory drug (steroid) into the epidural space to help stop nerve root inflammation. This is carried out under local anaesthetic and sometimes assisted by the use of an x-ray X-ray. You may feel different sensations during the procedure- please tell your doctor about these immediately. Your doctor will usually perform this with you sitting up- but occasionally an x-ray is used so you may be lying flat over a pillow on your stomach.

After your back is painted with antiseptic, your doctor will numb the skin with local anaesthetic and then you will feel some pressure. Tell your doctor if you feel unwell or you get funny sensations down your legs. Once in the correct position a mixture of the local anaesthetic and steroid will be slowly injected. You may feel pressure but it shouldn't hurt. It takes between 15 -30 mins for the whole procedure.

### *What will I be able to do afterwards?*

After 60-90 minutes you should be able to walk and can be discharged after 2 hours. Before you go we will ask you to describe your pain on a scale of 0-10. On occasion your legs may feel temporarily numb or weak for a few hours and this is why you should have someone with you. Do not walk without assistance if this happens. You may experience some muscle ache around the injection site for a few days, and once the local anaesthetic wears off it can be five days before you obtain pain relief from the anti-inflammatory drug.

Do not drive or drink alcohol for twenty-four hours after the procedure.

You may resume your normal level of activity the following day and should be able to return to work. It is important to realise that any relief obtained from this procedure should be used to gradually increase your activity levels. It is also important to realise that your own daily exercise programme is for life and stopping it will usually cause the pain and stiffness to return.

### *Will I experience any side effects?*

You may experience the following symptoms: - • Pain • Headache • Infection • Inability to pass urine • Dizziness especially with neck injections • Side effects from the anti-inflammatory are very uncommon and include temporary skin flushing . Rare side effects such as permanent nerve problems, bleeding and allergic reactions can occur but are extremely rare.

### *Are there any risks involved in epidural injection?*

There is an element of risk involved in all the procedures and treatments that you may have at the pain clinic. However you should remember that these risks are usually minimal. Your doctor will discuss these fully before your procedure and will be happy to answer all your questions. As with all procedures you will be asked to complete an agreement to treat consent form before the procedure

## *What happens afterwards?*

The Pain Nurse will phone you between 2-5 days after the procedure and ask about your level of pain and how you are feeling. Depending on the results, you may be asked to return for a repeat procedure, you may be asked to return to the clinic to see the pain specialist or you may be referred back to your own GP. In many cases the epidural injections will have no important effect, and as such there is no indication to repeat this procedure. Your pain specialist will communicate the plans to both yourself and your GP and if you have any queries please contact the Pain Services.

## *Who should I contact if I have any problems following treatment?*

You can contact the Pain Clinic on **09 486 8972** between 9-3pm, Monday to Friday. Outside these hours you should contact your own GP or if you have severe symptoms please present to the ED of either NSH or Waitakere Hospital. Before you leave we will give you a discharge letter and if you need to present to your GP or ED please take this with you.

## **Please go immediately to the ED if you have any of the following problems**

- Sudden and severe back pain
- New or developing weakness of your legs
- Inability to feel the need to pass urine or incontinence
- Feeling generally acutely unwell