

Midline epidural/epidural block

Introduction

You will soon be coming to Amstelland Hospital for an epidural block. This leaflet provides additional information on this treatment. Be aware that your personal situation may differ from the one described in this leaflet.

What is an epidural block?

An epidural block is a treatment in which an anti-inflammatory agent is injected into the spinal cord or the pathway of a nerve root. The goal of the treatment is to reduce pain. The pain is blocked, as it were, hence the terms 'block' and 'epidural' refer to the space around the spinal cord. The treatment can take place on the neck, chest, the lower back or the tailbone.

Important to note

Always contact (before your next treatment) the Pain Medicine Department if one of the following applies to you and you have not yet discussed this with the pain specialist. The following information may be important for your treatment:

- *Use of blood-thinning medication*
The pain specialist will discuss with you whether, and how long in advance, you have to stop taking this medication.
- *A (potential) pregnancy*
X-rays will be taken during this treatment, and these are potentially harmful to an unborn child.
- *Diabetes*

- *Allergy or hypersensitivity to iodinated contrast agents, iodine, medication or adhesive plaster.*

The day of the treatment

The treatment will be performed in the treatment rooms, location C 36. From the main entrance, follow the yellow route to the right (31-50).

Upon arrival, you will report on time to the reception desk of the Treatment Centre.

You can sit down in the waiting room. Because X-rays will be taken, anyone accompanying you may not be present during the treatment. Please count on staying at the hospital for roughly an hour. During your treatment, the person accompanying you can use the restaurant in the hall.

The treatment

The injection can be administered to the patient in two different ways:

- while sitting on the edge of the bed;
- under radioscopy (direct observation of objects opaque to light using some form of radiant energy), while lying on a narrow table on the stomach.

The skin will be numbed at the site of the injection. Once the pain specialist has inserted the needle into the correct location, an anesthetic and an anti-inflammatory agent will be injected.

The treatment lasts for approximately ten minutes. After the treatment, you will be taken to the Pain Medicine

Department. You will remain there for roughly an hour under a nurse's supervision.

Sometimes the treatment is performed at the request of the neurologist. The neurologist will subsequently perform the follow-up check.

Complications/side effects

The following complications or side effects may develop after an epidural block:

- A numb feeling in the legs or pubic area. This disappears after a few hours once the anesthetic has worn off.
- A temporary loss of strength in the legs and/or feet.
- Sometimes, patients temporarily experience difficulty urinating after undergoing the treatment.
- Women may experience hot flushes and their menstruation may be disrupted for a short time.
- The contraceptive pill will not be reliable until the next menstrual period!
- The blood sugar values of diabetic patients may fluctuate.
- It is possible for the spinal cord membrane to be punctured, which may lead to headaches and dizziness. The treatment is implemented with caution. Nevertheless, there is a slight possibility of this complication occurring. If the headache and/or dizziness last for longer than two days, please contact the Pain Management Department.
- If a small blood vessel is hit during the insertion of the needle, bruising may appear. This bruising can be somewhat painful.

Going home

After the treatment, you may not drive yourself on the same day. You must ensure that someone else brings you home.

Home again

Post-treatment pain may occur as a result of the injection. This pain can last for several days. You can take painkillers for this (e.g. paracetamol according to the package leaflet).

A plaster will be attached to the site of the needle insertion. You can remove this in the evening or on the following day. At that point, you can shower and bathe again.

Only after six weeks to two months can the result of the treatment be assessed. The pain specialist will discuss with you when he/she would like to see you again at the outpatient clinic for a follow-up check.

Attention!

The contraceptive pill will not be reliable until the next menstrual period!

You should urinate within five hours after the treatment. If this does not happen, you should (immediately after those five hours) contact the Pain Medicine Department or the on-duty anesthetist.

Questions?

Should you still have questions after reading this leaflet, you can contact the Pain Medicine Outpatient Clinic at +31 (0)20 755 7010.

Notes on this leaflet

If any information in this leaflet is unclear or incomplete, please notify us. You can share your remarks with us via voorlichting@zha.nl.