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Advanced Pain Medicine Institute

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Epidural Steroid Injections; Are there risks?

As with all invasive medical procedures, there are potential risks associated with epidural steroid injections. The most common potential risks and complications include:

- Infection. Severe infections are rare, occurring in 0.1% to 0.01% of injections.
- Dural puncture. A Dural puncture occurs in 0.5% of injections. It may cause a severe headache (also called a spinal headache) that usually improves within a few days.
- Bleeding. Bleeding is a rare complication that infrequently occurs in patients without underlying bleeding disorders.
- Nerve damage. While extremely rare, nerve damage can occur from direct trauma from the needle. This risk is decreased by using pictures and guides to guide the needle placement.

In addition to risks from the injection, there are also potential side effects from the steroid medication itself. These tend to be rare, temporary and much less common than the side effects from oral steroids. Nonetheless some reported side effects from epidural steroid injections include:

- Localized pain at the injection site
- Acne
- Facial flushing
- Anxiety
- Sleeplessness
- Fever the night of injection
- High blood sugar
- A decrease in immunity
- Peripheral edema (water retention)
- Avascular necrosis (severe arthritis of the hips)
- Cataracts
- Thinning of the skin

Speak with your medical provider directly if you have any concerns about your procedure. Be careful when using the internet, friends or relatives to guide your medical care.

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