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Discharge Instructions After Spinal Injections

Success of the Procedure

A spinal injection is an outpatient procedure that delivers a steroid medication and a local anesthetic into the spine to try to relieve pain. In some cases, the injection may also provide information about where pain may be coming from. Injections don't relieve pain in everyone, and may not reduce pain completely when they do work. Combining injections with other treatments such as physical therapy, exercise, and certain medications may improve success.

What to Expect After the Procedure

Tenderness at the insertion site can occur for a few hours after the procedure. An ice pack can be applied for 10-15 minutes twice an hour. Avoid strenuous activity for the remainder of the day following the procedure. Normal activity may be resumed the following day. The injected steroid may cause temporarily increased pain for the first three days after the procedure before feeling the benefits of pain relief. It may take up to two weeks to feel relief from the injection. Your follow-up appointment will usually be around two weeks after the injection.

The success and the length of pain relief from the injection are variable for each patient. It is important to follow up with your doctor to discuss any further treatments.

Possible Side Effects

- Localized increased pain
- Headache, facial flushing, anxiety, sleeplessness

- Fever the night following the injection
- Increased blood sugar

If any of these symptoms persist, please call your doctor.

Long-term risks of treatment with steroid medications include bone loss, increased blood sugars, and immune problems. It is generally recommended to have no more than three sets of these injections in a six-month period.

Complications

Spinal headaches are severe headaches that are worse in an upright position and improve when lying down. Treatment includes laying flat for 48 hours, increasing fluid intake as well as caffeine intake. The headache usually improves within a few days, but if not, treatments such as a blood patch can help.

While extremely rare, nerve damage or spinal cord stroke can occur after the injection. Infection or bleeding in the spine have also been reported.

High fever, stiff neck, or worsening weakness in the arms or legs could be a sign of a serious problem. Call 911 if these symptoms are present.

For questions after the procedure, please call 401-606-6360. If you feel you have an urgent problem outside of office hours, go to the nearest Emergency Department.



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