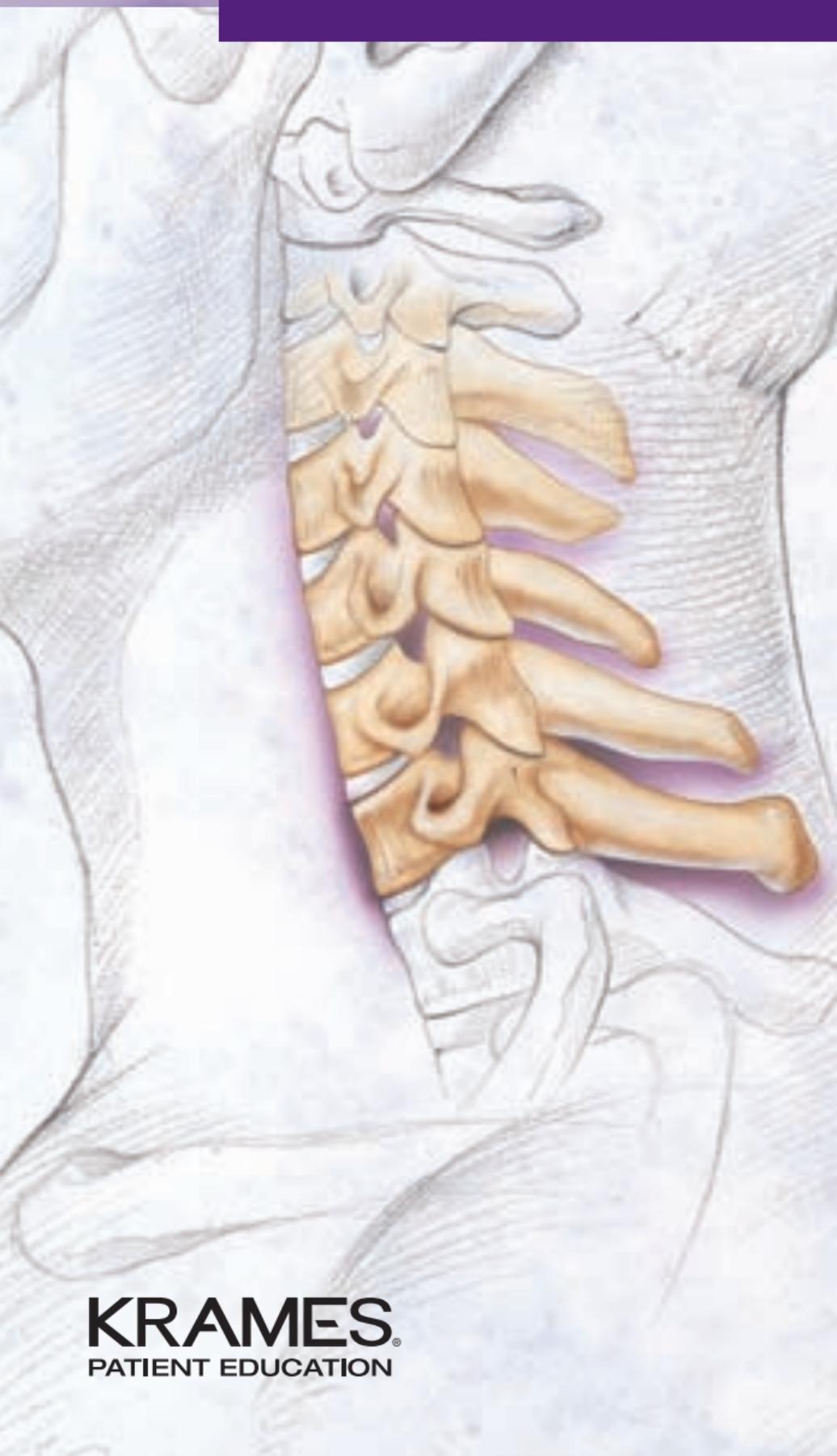
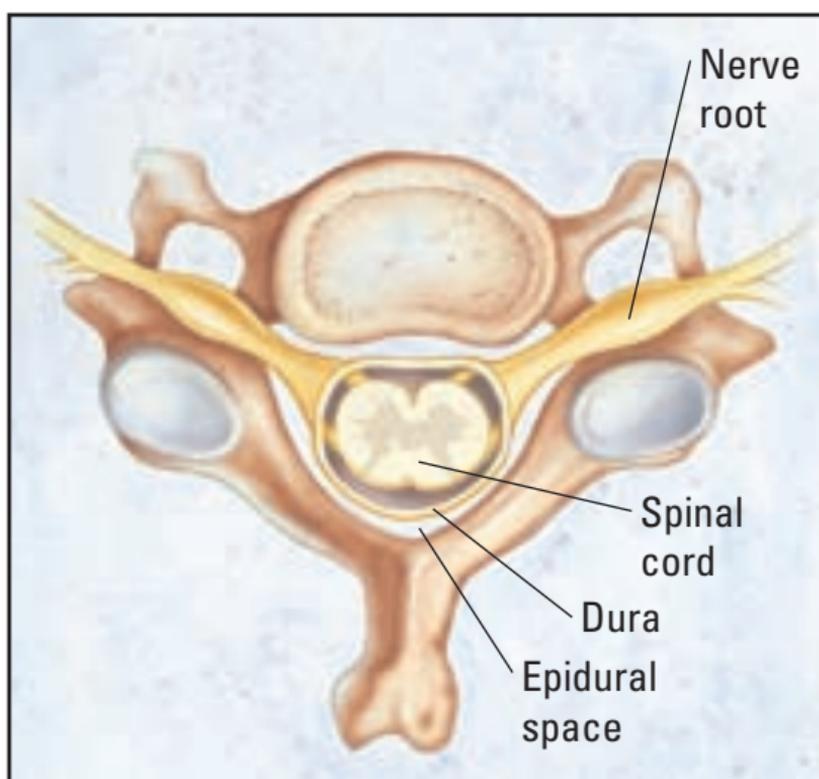


# Cervical Epidural Injection



# The Cervical Vertebrae

The **cervical vertebrae** are the bones that support your neck and head. They form the top part of your spine. The tunnel made by these vertebrae is called the **spinal canal**. The **spinal cord** runs through the spinal canal, inside a sac called the **dura**. Nerves branch off the spinal cord and exit through the vertebrae. Pressure on one of these nerves may cause it to become **inflamed** (irritated and swollen). An inflamed nerve in your neck may cause neck pain that may also be felt in your head or arms.



## The Cervical Epidural Injection

To help relieve your pain, medication is injected into the **epidural space**. This space surrounds the dura within the spinal canal. Your doctor may also do a **nerve block**. During this procedure, medication is injected near a specific **nerve root** (the part of the nerve that leaves the spinal canal). A nerve block can help your doctor find out which nerve or nerves are the source of your pain.

# Relieving Neck Pain

For certain types of neck pain, your doctor may suggest a **cervical epidural injection**. With this treatment, medication is injected into your neck near your spine. The injection helps the doctor find the source of your pain. It can also help relieve your pain and soreness.



If a nerve problem is causing neck pain, a cervical epidural injection may help you.

## Getting Ready

To get ready for your treatment, do the following:

- At least a week before treatment, tell your doctor what medications you take (including aspirin). Ask whether you should stop taking any of them before treatment.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or allergic to any medications.
- Stop eating or drinking 8 hours before you check in for your injection, or as directed.
- If asked, bring x-rays, MRIs, or other tests with you on the day of your treatment.

# Your Injection Experience

The injection is done in a hospital or surgery center. You'll be asked to fill out some forms, including a consent form. You may also be examined. You may be given an **IV** (intravenous) line for fluids and medications.

## During the Procedure

To help you relax, medication may be given through the IV line. You will lie on an exam table on your stomach or side, or sit in a chair. Stay as still as you can. During your treatment:

- The skin over the injection site is cleaned. A **local anesthetic** (pain medication) numbs the skin.
- **Fluoroscopy** (x-ray imaging) may be used to help your doctor see where the injection needs to go. A contrast “dye” may be injected into the region to help obtain a better image.
- The cervical epidural injection is given. It may contain a local anesthetic to numb the region, **steroids** (medications that reduce inflammation), or both.



A fluoroscope may be used to help the doctor see your spine during the procedure.



Take it easy at home for the rest of the day after the injection, even if you feel good.

## **After the Procedure**

Most often, you can go home in about an hour. Have an adult friend or relative drive you. When the anesthetic wears off, your neck may feel more sore than usual. This is normal. Rest and put ice on the area for 20 minutes a few times during the first day. The steroids most often begin to work in 3 to 4 days. Ask your doctor when it's OK to return to your job.

## **When to Call Your Doctor**

Call your doctor if you have a fever over 101°F, nausea, severe headaches, increased arm weakness or numbness, problems swallowing, or a severe increase in pain.

## **Risks and Complications**

Risks and complications are rare, but can include:

- Infection
- Spinal headaches
- Bleeding or fluid leakage in the spinal cord
- Nerve damage
- Prolonged increase in pain

# Discussing Your Results

The injection may provide pain relief for weeks to months. But in some cases, you may need more injections to get pain relief. Or, another type of treatment may be needed. See your doctor for a follow-up visit to discuss the results of your injection.

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