



# Epidural and Facet Injections

*How to prepare for your procedure*

Your doctor has asked the radiologist to do a special spinal procedure – either an epidural injection or a facet injection. This handout describes how to prepare for the procedure, what to expect from it, and care instructions for after either of these injections.

This spinal procedure may be done for:

- Back pain.
- Sciatica (pain going down the back of the leg).
- Diagnostic reasons, to identify symptoms and plan for your care.
- Therapeutic reasons.

## Before an Epidural or Facet Injection Procedure

- Do not eat or drink anything 2 hours before your procedure is scheduled.
- It is OK to take your normal medicines with a small sip of water.
- If you take blood-thinning medicine such as Coumadin (warfarin), Plavix, or Lovenox, talk with your primary care provider about stopping it before this procedure and restarting it after the procedure is done.
- If you have diabetes and take insulin, check with your doctor about adjusting your dose during the time you are not allowed to eat. If you are taking pills for diabetes, let the radiologist know this on the day of your procedure.
- If you are allergic to contrast “radiology dye,” please tell your referring doctor. He or she may want to prescribe medicines that you will need to take before the procedure is done.
- Arrange to have someone drive you home. For your safety, do not drive until the day after your procedure.

## Your Epidural Injection

- An *epidural* is an injection that delivers medicine directly into the *epidural space* in your spine. The epidural space surrounds the spinal cord and spinal nerves.
- The radiologist will clean your lower back with an antiseptic solution and numb the area where the needle will be inserted.

- After the area is anesthetized, the radiologist will insert a different needle into the epidural space using the X-ray machine for guidance, and will inject contrast to check the position.
- A *steroid* (a medicine to reduce inflammation) mixed with a local anesthetic is injected through the needle into the epidural space. The needle is removed after this is done. You may feel some pressure while the steroid is being injected.
- You will be observed for 30 minutes before going home.

### Your Facet Joint Injection

The facet joint is the space between 2 vertebrae (bony) parts of the spine that are separated by a thin layer of cartilage. An abnormality or inflammation of these joints may cause low back pain.

- The radiologist will clean your skin and inject it with *licocaine* to make it numb.
- After the area is anesthetized, the radiologist will insert a different needle into the area between the 2 vertebrae (the facet space) using the X-ray machine for guidance.
- A combination of contrast, a numbing medicine, and a steroid is injected. You may experience some pressure during the injection. The needle is then removed.
- You will be observed for 30 minutes before going home.

### What to Expect from Your Procedure

With either of the 2 procedures, you may have complete relief of your pain. This may be due at first to the direct effects of the numbing medicine used in the procedure. Your pain may return as the numbing medicine starts to wear off, but improve in several days to weeks if the steroid is successful in relieving your symptoms. If the procedure works, relief can last weeks or months.

You may have no relief from your symptoms after the procedure. Your doctor might then order another procedure. If several injections are done over a period of weeks, more injections are unlikely to provide relief.

### Getting Your Results

The results of your spinal procedure will be sent to your primary care provider. You will be able to get the results from your provider in 3 to 5 business days. Call your doctor to talk about the results of your procedure.

## Questions?

Call the Roosevelt  
Radiology Nurse:  
206-598-6622

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. Clinic staff are also available to help.

- UWMC Imaging Services:  
206-598-6200
- UW Roosevelt Radiology:  
206-598-6868
- Harborview Imaging Services:  
206-744-3105

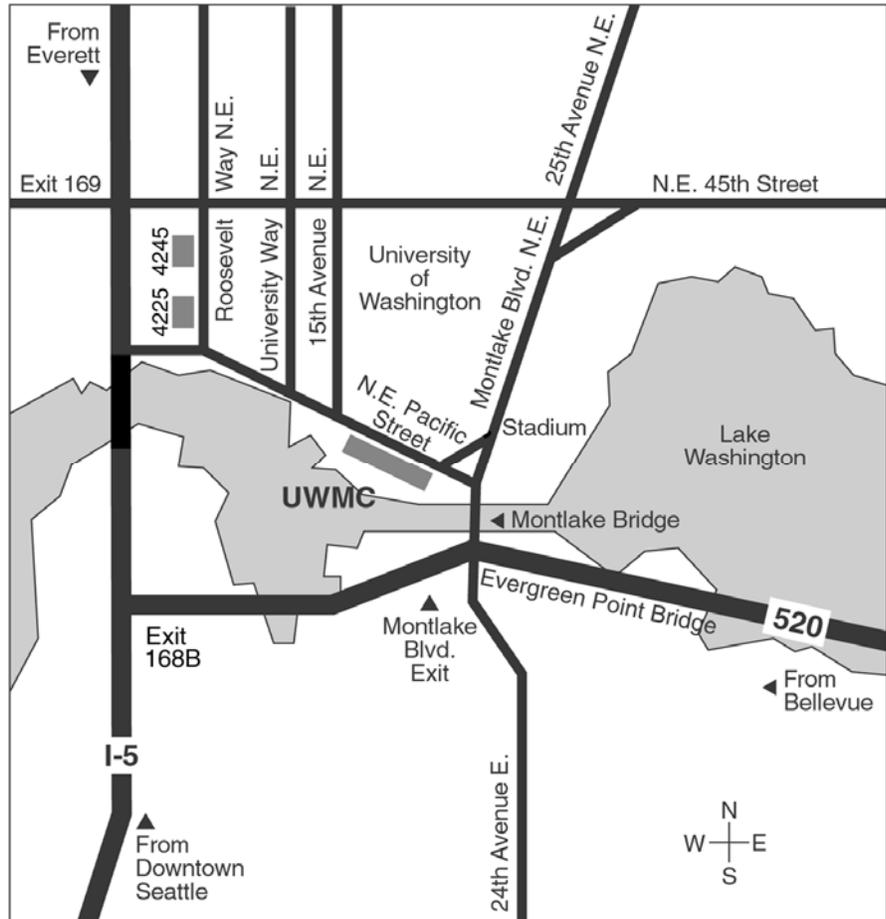
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### UWMC Imaging Services

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