

[IMAGE]

Another Reason to Avoid Epidural Steroids

By Editorial Staff

While the uproar surrounding tainted steroid injections causing fungal meningitis has left the mainstream news after months on the front pages, hundreds of reported illnesses and far too many deaths, it's high time for a reminder of why epidural steroids – tainted or not – shouldn't be so commonly prescribed for back pain. According to a study in the research journal *Spine*, which compared spine patients who received epidural injections to patients who did not receive injections, steroids "were associated with significantly less improvement at 4 years among all patients with spinal stenosis."

In other words, patients who received the injections were in worse shape after four years than patients who did not receive injections – regardless of whether either type of patient ultimately underwent surgery to "relieve" their pain. Not exactly an endorsement of epidural steroid injections or surgery. What's more, patients in both groups had similar initial symptoms / pain scores, dispelling the notion that patients who received injections had worse initial pain or a worse condition than non-injected patients.

Epidural Steroids - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Spinal stenosis is a narrowing of the open spaces in the spine. As you might expect, this can put pressure on the spinal cord and nerves, leading to neck or back pain. It is most commonly caused by wear and tear over time, which puts you at higher risk as you get older (particularly over age 50 or so).

Spinal stenosis and other conditions that cause back pain and related symptoms often don't require medication, injections or surgery. Your doctor of chiropractic is an ideal health care provider to visit first if you're suffering from back pain, particularly since research suggests your odds of undergoing spine surgery are much lower if your initial health care provider is a chiropractor versus a spine surgeon.

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