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AFTER YOUR INJECTION

General instructions for spine and joint injection procedures

These instructions apply to injection procedures such as epidural steroid injections, nerve blocks, facet and joint injections, and sacroiliac joint injections. Separate instructions are provided for surgical procedures and radiofrequency ablation. If your physician gave you different instructions, follow your physician's instructions.

Most injections deliver a local anesthetic (numbing medicine), a steroid (to reduce inflammation and nerve irritation), or both. The local anesthetic can cause temporary numbness or weakness in the legs (after low back procedures) or arms (after neck procedures). This usually wears off within several hours.

THE REST OF TODAY

1. **Take it easy for the rest of the day.** Avoid strenuous activity. You may return to your normal activities and to work the next day unless you were told otherwise.
2. **Be careful when walking.** Your arms or legs may feel weak or numb for several hours. Have someone help you and avoid stairs if you feel unsteady.
3. **Do not drive for the rest of the day** if you received any sedation. If you did not receive sedation, we recommend that someone else drive you home.
4. **If you had oral or IV sedation:** for 24 hours, do not drive, drink alcohol, operate machinery, or sign important documents.

CARE OF THE INJECTION SITE

- Keep the bandage clean and dry for 24 hours, then remove it.
- You may shower. Do not soak the site (no bath, swimming pool, hot tub, or whirlpool) for 24 hours.
- For soreness, apply ice or a cold pack wrapped in a thin towel for up to 20 minutes at a time, several times a day. Never place ice directly on the skin.
- Do not apply heat the day of your procedure. Beginning the next day, you may use ice or heat, whichever helps more.
- Soreness, stiffness, mild bruising, or muscle cramping near the injection site for a few days is common and will go away.

MEDICATIONS

- For soreness the day of the procedure, you may take acetaminophen (Tylenol) or your usual prescribed pain medication as directed.
- Beginning 24 hours after the procedure, you may take ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), naproxen (Aleve), or aspirin if your doctor allows these and you are not taking a blood thinner.

- **Blood thinners:** if you stopped a blood thinner for this procedure, restart it the day after your procedure unless you were told otherwise.
- Resume all other regular medications unless you were told otherwise.

STEROID SIDE EFFECTS

If your injection included a steroid, you may notice any of the following for several days to a week. These effects are common and temporary:

- Facial or chest flushing or a feeling of warmth
- Increased appetite, fluid retention, or difficulty sleeping
- Feeling unusually energetic or restless for a day or two
- Changes in your menstrual cycle
- **Higher blood sugar.** If you are diabetic, check your blood sugar 3 to 4 times a day for the first week. Contact your primary care physician or endocrinologist if your readings stay high or are not returning to normal within one to two weeks.
- **Higher blood pressure.** If you have high blood pressure, check it more often during the first week and contact your primary care physician if it stays elevated.

WHAT TO EXPECT AND REPORTING YOUR RELIEF

- Your pain may temporarily worsen for a day or two before it improves. This is common.
- Steroid relief usually begins within 2 to 7 days but can take up to 2 weeks.
- How long relief lasts is different for every patient and every procedure. It may last from a few days to many months.
- Keep track of your pain on a scale of 0 (no pain) to 10 (worst pain imaginable) until your follow-up visit.

Your relief report is important. Many insurance plans will not approve a repeat injection or the next step in treatment unless we document how much relief you had and how long it lasted. If you were asked to, call our office about 14 days after your injection. You may leave a voicemail with your name, date of birth, a return phone number, and your relief level:

Relief Level	Percentage of Improvement
None or slight improvement	0% to 20%
Moderate improvement	30% to 40%
Significant improvement	50% to 70%
Excellent improvement	75% to 100%

WHEN TO CALL US

Call our office right away if you have:

- Redness, warmth, swelling, drainage, or increasing tenderness at the injection site
- A fever of 101°F or higher, or chills
- A severe headache that is worse when you sit or stand up and better when you lie down
- New or increasing numbness, tingling, or weakness in your arms or legs that has not gone away within several hours
- Severe or rapidly worsening back or neck pain

Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room if you have:

- Weakness, paralysis, or inability to move your arms or legs
- Loss of control of your bladder or bowels
- Chest pain or difficulty breathing
- Signs of a severe allergic reaction, such as swelling of the face or throat, hives, or trouble breathing

Questions or Concerns

Call Coastal Spine & Pain at **(251) 291-2311**, Monday through Thursday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

For a medical emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

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