

Epidural Blood Patch

Instructions for patients going home

Read this brochure to learn more about:

- How to take care of yourself after this procedure
- What activities you can do
- How to care for your dressing and wound
- How to cope with pain
- Problems to watch for
- When to expect your follow-up appointment



You have had an anesthetic or narcotic medicine.

- Do not drive a car or drink alcohol for 24 hours.
- Have a responsible adult stay with you overnight.



What is an epidural blood patch?

An epidural blood patch is a procedure that removes a small amount of blood from the arm and injects into the epidural space (an area in the spinal cord).

Why do I need this procedure?

This procedure is done when there is a leak of cerebrospinal fluid into the outer membrane of the spinal cord. This leak of cerebrospinal fluid can cause headaches that usually happen when standing and disappear when lying down. The leak can occur suddenly or by a needle puncture into the spine.

If the leak has occurred because of a spinal puncture, the headache will disappear within the first 30 minutes after the procedure.

If the leak occurred on its own (called spontaneous intracranial hypotension), it usually takes days to weeks to improve.

What you can eat and drink after my procedure?

You can go back to eating and drinking what you normally would right away.

How much activity is safe?

- Go home and rest today.
- Return to your normal everyday activities after 24 hours.
- No heavy lifting, strenuous activities or sports for the first 24 hours.
- Avoid straining when going to the bathroom for the first 24 hours.
- Return to work when your doctor says it is safe to do so.

How do I take care of my bandage (dressing) and wound?

- Leave the bandage in place for 24 hours. Then remove the bandage.
- Keep the puncture site clean.

When can I shower or bathe?

- You can shower 24 hours after the procedure.
- Do not take a bath for the first 24 hours.

How do I cope with pain?

- You may have slight headaches. Take acetaminophen (Tylenol Extra Strength), when needed. You can buy this over-the-counter pain reliever at your local pharmacy.
- The headaches should get better with time.
- If your headaches disappear 30 minutes after the procedure, you will not need to take any medications.



Problems to watch for

Come to the Toronto Western hospital emergency department. If you are from out of town, go to the nearest emergency department if any of these problems happen to you:

- Headaches that don't go away when you take pain relief medications
- Severe pain in one or both legs
- A lot of bleeding from the puncture site
- A fever (temperature higher than 38 °C or 100 °F)

