

Leaving hospital after an epidural infusion

Information for patients, parents and guardians

You have been given this factsheet because your child has had epidural pain relief during their stay in hospital. Please read it carefully and keep it in a safe place in case you need to refer to it again.

An epidural can provide excellent pain relief following surgery. Problems following an epidural are rare, but they do sometimes happen. If complications occur, it's usually the result of bleeding or infection inside the spine.

It's important to understand that complications can occur days or even weeks after epidural removal. Therefore, if your child experiences any problems after their epidural it's very important that you seek advice from a healthcare professional as soon as possible. This is because early treatment may prevent permanent damage.

Looking after the epidural site

- The site where the epidural was removed should be kept clean and dry to minimise the risk of infection.
- Your child can have a bath or shower as normal once epidural line has been removed, as long as this does not interfere with other treatment.

Possible complications

Infections

Infections can develop under the skin surface or more deeply, closer to the spinal cord and major nerves. Infections are very rare, but require urgent treatment with antibiotics.

Bleeding

Bleeding within the spine may cause pressure on the spinal cord or spinal nerves. Fortunately, this is very rare, but should it occur an urgent operation is needed to relieve the pressure and remove any blood clot.

Headaches

A severe headache can occur after an epidural. This happens because the lining of the fluid-filled space surrounding the spinal cord has been accidentally punctured.

More information on headaches following an epidural can be found in the 'Headache after an epidural or spinal anaesthetic' leaflet from the Royal College of Anaesthetists (RCOA).

This can be found on their website www.rcoa.ac.uk or ask your nurse for a copy.

Symptoms to look out for

Once you have left the hospital, we recommend that you watch your child carefully for any signs of complication.

These are:

- Persistent or worsening redness or swelling at the epidural site (some minor swelling is common in the first few days after removal).
- Persistent fever (temperature, sweats, shakes).
- Any discharge (fluid leaking) from the epidural site.
- Intense headaches which worsen when upright or moving to stand up, and which ease when lying flat.
- Severe pain previously not experienced around the site where the epidural was removed.
- Altered sensation in legs and/or arms, such as numbness, tingling, or weakness.
- Changes in bladder and/or bowel control previously not experienced before the epidural.

If your child has any of the above symptoms you should:

- Contact the children's pain team via our main switchboard on **023 8077 7222**, asking for bleep number **2780** (during office hours).
- If it is outside office hours, contact the ward on which your child was cared for. The ward should then contact the on-call anaesthetist and ask them to phone you back.

If the above is not possible, go to your nearest emergency department.

Please inform them that your child has recently had an epidural.

Epidural removal date:.....

Further information

We hope that this leaflet will help you to understand what to look out for when your child leaves hospital.

If you feel that more information is required or you have any concerns, please speak to the children's pain team on **023 8120 5134** or ask the nursing and medical staff on the ward.

You should have received a copy of our children's 'Epidural infusion' leaflet. If you do not have this, please ask your nurse for a copy.

For more information, you may find these websites useful:

Association of Paediatric Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland
www.apagbi.org.uk

Royal College of Anaesthetists
www.rcoa.ac.uk

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