

Epidural Haematoma Advice

Acute Pain Service

Information for Patients who have had an Epidural Infusion

Introduction

Serious complications from epidural analgesia are **rare** (1 in 10,000). Because the epidural space is close to the spinal cord, a collection of fluid such as pus, or a blood clot, can cause pressure on the spinal cord. In the unlikely event that there is pressure on the spinal cord, it is crucial to diagnose and treat this as soon as possible. This must be done by expert hospital doctors to prevent delays in treatment and long lasting damage. This leaflet tells you what to look for and what action to take if you think that you have a problem following the removal of your epidural.

Assessment before the removal of the epidural catheter

The drugs used in your epidural infusion may cause some weakness or numbness in your legs. After your epidural has been stopped, your doctors and nurses caring for you will examine you to make sure that you do not have any residual numbness or weakness due to the drugs in the epidural. They will test this by asking you to lift your legs up straight (one at a time without bending your knees). They will also examine you to ensure that the sensation in your legs is the same as it was before your operation. It is important to remember that some operations can cause altered sensation in the legs therefore any changes experienced may be a result of the surgery and not due to the epidural.

Advice for whilst you are still in hospital

If you experience any of the signs and symptoms below **as a new problem**, after your epidural has been stopped, please tell the nurse in charge of the ward immediately so that they can contact the Acute Pain Service or the on call anaesthetist straight away.

Advice for once you have been discharged

If you experience any of the signs and symptoms below once you have been discharged, please contact the on call anaesthetist at the hospital **immediately** by telephoning the switchboard on **01932 872 000** and asking the switchboard operator to **Page 5011**. After speaking to the on call anaesthetist, they will arrange to see you in the Accident and Emergency Department at St. Peter's Hospital so that they can examine you.

Signs and symptoms

The following symptoms may need investigating as detailed above:

- You have redness, pus, tenderness or pain at the epidural site (where it was inserted into your back)
- You feel generally unwell even though your surgical wound seems to be fine
- You have a high temperature with neck stiffness
- You have numbness and/or weakness in your legs with inability to weight bear
- You have difficulty passing water and/or you are incontinent of faeces

For further advice about the above please contact the Acute Pain Service nursing team on **01932 722 281**

PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE A MESSAGE ON THIS NUMBER IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING ANY OF THE ABOVE SYMPTOMS AS YOUR MESSAGE MAY NOT BE PICKED UP IMMEDIATELY

Please follow the advice given above

Further Information

We endeavour to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Matron, Senior Nurse or Manager on duty. If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01932 723553 or email pals@asph.nhs.uk. If you still remain concerned please contact our Complaints Manager on 01932 722612 or email complaints@asph.nhs.uk

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We can provide interpreters for a variety of languages, information in larger print or other formats (e.g. audio) - please call us on 01932 723553.



To use the Text Relay service, prefix all numbers with 18802.

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Jeżeli chcemy, aby te informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić 01932 723553

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