



Inpatient Pain Service

Discharge Advice following the Removal of your Epidural Catheter

During your hospital admission, you had an epidural catheter (tube) inserted into your back by an anaesthetist for pain relief. Now that the epidural catheter has been removed, there are some symptoms you need to look out for over the next seven days. This is to ensure you have not had any complications from the epidural.

This leaflet outlines the signs and symptoms to be aware of and gives guidance on any action needed.

Your epidural information

Date epidural inserted:

Date and time epidural removed:

Signed by a registered nurse:

Date:

The removal of your epidural

We have removed the epidural catheter (tube) from your back. Rarely, complications can occur after an epidural is removed, so we will be keeping a close check on you over the next 24 hours whilst you are still in hospital. The nurses will continue to ask you if you have any pain or change in the feeling or strength in your arms and legs.

Infections

We will make sure that the area where the catheter was inserted is kept clean and dry. This is because, very rarely, an infection can develop at the site where the epidural was inserted. The nurses will look for any early signs of infection such as heat, pain and swelling. An infection can develop on the surface, under the skin or more deeply close to the spinal cord and major nerves. This could be an abscess (a collection of pus) or meningitis. These infections are very rare but require urgent treatment with antibiotics and/or surgery to prevent the nerve injury becoming permanent.

Haematomas

There is a very small chance that blood may collect around the area where the epidural was inserted. This is known as an epidural haematoma or bruise. This bruise may press on a nerve or the spinal cord and damage it. Occasionally, an urgent operation is needed to remove the haematoma and relieve the pressure to prevent the nerve injury becoming permanent. Again, this is rare.

What you need to look out for

For the first seven days after you leave hospital, it is important that you or your carers look carefully for any signs of infection in the area where the epidural was inserted. After the first seven days, please continue to check for symptoms which could suggest a complication with your epidural.

Symptoms to watch for:

- Severe, lasting redness or swelling around the area where the epidural was inserted. Note that minor swelling and redness is common but should disappear a few days after removal.
- Pus (a yellow or green coloured ooze from where the epidural was inserted).
- Fever.
- New, severe back pain near where the epidural was inserted.
- Changes in the feeling or strength in your arms and legs.
- Difficulty passing urine (water) that you did not have before your surgery. If you become aware of any of the above, please go to your nearest Emergency Department (ED) and tell them that you have recently had an epidural. Take this leaflet with you.

Contact Numbers:

We hope that you have found this information useful. If you have any questions or are worried about anything, please speak to the following Dorset County Hospital Staff:

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If you have feedback regarding the accuracy of the information contained in this leaflet, or if you would like a list of references used to develop this leaflet, please email pals@dchft.nhs.uk



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