

Let's Talk About  
**Epidural Blood  
Patch Information**

### Post-Procedure

After the blood patch is placed, you will be asked to lie completely flat for at least an hour. Your headache may get better immediately, or it may take 4-6 hours to improve. Your driver will take you home. You may not drive for 24 hours.

### Home Instructions/Follow-up

Once home, you should take it easy. Your back may feel stiff and sore for a few days. Avoid any heavy lifting or intense physical activity for 24 hours. No swimming or tub baths for 24 hours. Taking a shower is OK.

Try to avoid constipation. Straining may make your headache worse again. Drink plenty of fluids, eat plenty of fiber.

### Watch For Signs Of Infection

- ✦ Fever
- ✦ Increased redness, swelling around the blood patch site
- ✦ Any drainage from the site
- ✦ Severe stiff neck, problems thinking clearly
- ✦ Weakness or numbness in your legs
- ✦ Bladder problems

IF YOU HAVE NEW SYMPTOMS, OR SIGNS  
OF INFECTION, PLEASE CALL THE OHSU  
HOSPITAL 503-494-8311 AND ASK FOR THE  
ANESTHESIOLOGIST ON CALL OR RETURN  
TO THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

The information provided should not be used during any medical emergency or for the diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. A licensed physician should be consulted for diagnosis and treatment of any and all medical conditions. Call on for all medical emergencies.





# epidural blood patch



## Epidural Blood Patch

You are being evaluated because you have a headache, which may be a Postdural Puncture Headache. This is a particular type of headache caused by a leak of spinal fluid. This can happen because of

- ✦ A lumbar puncture
- ✦ A spinal injection
- ✦ An epidural
- ✦ After a neurosurgical procedure

When someone has this kind of headache a procedure called an Epidural Blood Patch may be considered.

In some cases you may be strongly advised in favor of an epidural blood patch, for example if your headache followed an epidural for pain during labor. This is because in this case an epidural needle is a large needle and if it causes a fluid leak it can take a long time for the leak to resolve on its own and it may cause other complications.

In other cases an epidural blood patch may be discussed with you but you may be advised that your headache will probably get better in a week or so on its own and it may be better to continue with less risky treatments which include rest, caffeine, fluid and over the counter pain medicines.

## What Is An Epidural Blood Patch?

An epidural blood patch places your own blood into the epidural space, which seals up the hole and stops the leak of fluid, allowing the repair process to occur. The epidural blood patch is effective in about 60% of cases of Postdural Puncture Headache. Sometimes it is effective if the procedure is repeated.

## Pre-Procedure

A doctor who is an anesthesiologist will meet with you to evaluate you, gather details about your health history, current health, current medicines and any allergies, discuss your treatment options with you and answer your questions. You will be asked to sign a consent form. The risks of an epidural blood patch include:

- ✦ Failure to improve your headache.
- ✦ Making the headache worse by causing a bigger fluid leak.
- ✦ Back pain and pain going to your legs. This usually resolves in a few days but may last for several months.
- ✦ Rarely, serious infection in the back including meningitis or an abscess causing permanent nerve damage.

## Procedure - What to Expect

You may be asked to return at a later time for the epidural blood patch.

You may be asked not to eat or drink anything for 6 hours before the procedure.

One IV will be started in your arm. Some monitoring equipment will be placed on you. You may be given medicines to make you a little sleepy.

You will be asked to curl up either in a sitting position or on your side for the procedure.

The anesthesiologist will guide a needle into your back. Twenty mls (less than two tablespoons) of your blood will be drawn from your arm and immediately injected into your back. You may feel pressure in your back during the injection. The injection will be stopped if it becomes painful for you. The procedure usually takes about 30 to 45 minutes.