

Having an Epidural after Surgery

This pamphlet is about what to expect if you have an epidural after your surgery.

What is an epidural?

An epidural is a way to give you pain medicine after surgery. Before your surgery starts, the anesthetist (doctor who puts you to sleep for surgery) will put the epidural tube in. The epidural tube is about the size of a fishing line and is put in your back. The tube is attached to a pump with a bag of pain medicine. The pump sends the medicine to the area around your spinal cord.

Why should I have an epidural?

An epidural helps with severe (very bad) pain after some types of surgery. It may give you better pain relief than other ways of receiving pain medicine. Epidurals are a common way to provide safe pain control.

You may be more alert with an epidural than with other pain control methods. Being alert and having good pain control makes it easier to turn, cough, sit up, and walk after surgery. All of these movements are important to help you recover from surgery.

An epidural can help you move better after your surgery.

Knowing about the possible side effects and risks of having an epidural will help you decide if it is right for you. The doctor will talk with you about these side effects and risks.

What are the side effects?

Some patients notice that they:

- › have an upset stomach
- › feel sleepy
- › feel itchy
- › breathe slower
- › have trouble passing urine (pee) - you may have a tube draining your bladder

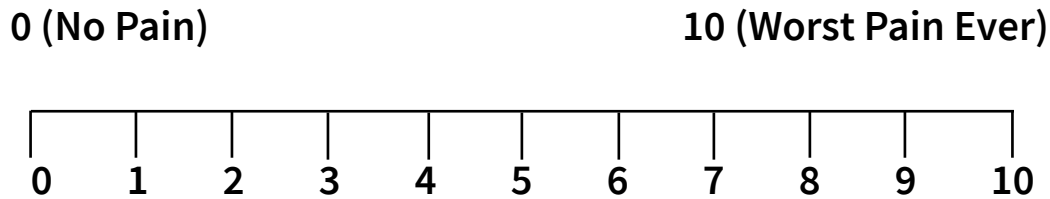
Please tell us if you notice any of these side effects. These side effects can be managed. The team will also monitor your ability to feel and move your legs.

Tell us if you notice any reactions to your pain medicine.

What can I expect for pain when I have an epidural?

You may still feel some mild pain or soreness. The goal is to have your pain managed so you can breathe deeply, cough, and move around.

When you are in the hospital, we will ask you to tell us about your pain using a scale from 0-10. We will ask, “If 0 is no pain and 10 is the worst pain ever, what number would you give your pain?” We will ask about your pain at rest and when you are moving around.



Who will look after my epidural pain relief?

A team member from the Acute Pain Service (APS) will visit you each day. The APS team is made up of anesthesiologists and nurses who are specially trained to help people with their pain.

How long will I have the epidural?

- Your epidural will be kept in place until your APS team decides to remove it.
- An epidural is usually left in for 3 days.

Looking for more health information?

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here: <http://library.nshealth.ca/PatientGuides>

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time: call 811 or visit <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

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