



Taking Care of Yourself After an Epidural Blood Patch

A very small percentage (less than 1% in our practice) of patients develop headache pain following a spinal procedure. This headache is caused by the leakage of cerebral spinal fluid through a small hole in the lining that surrounds your spinal cord. While this does not cause any danger to your brain or spinal cord, the headache pain can be quite severe and debilitating. An epidural blood patch was performed by the doctor to relieve your headache pain by sealing the hole in the membrane between your spinal cord and epidural space and stopping the leaking of spinal fluid. Most patients experience immediate relief of all or much of their headache pain. The blood taken from your arm and injected into your back forms a 'patch' to seal the hole in the membrane (dura) in a manner similar to applying a patch to an air leak in a tire. This patch must remain in place until the lining can heal itself. This usually only takes a couple of days.

After the procedure it is important to follow a few simple steps to make sure the new patch is not disrupted which could cause your headache symptoms to return.

These simple steps include:

- Go home and lay flat for 4-6 hours post procedure. Take it easy for the next 48hrs.
- Avoid straining while having a bowel movement.
- Do not lift anything over 5 lbs. for 48 hrs. after the procedure.
- Drink extra fluids. Caffeinated beverages have shown to help some patients.
- Take your usual pain medications (Motrin or Tylenol) if needed for any remaining headache symptoms or mild soreness/stiffness at the site of the blood patch procedure.
- Heat or Cold applied for short periods of time to your lower back may help relieve stiffness and soreness.

Go to the Emergency Room if you develop any of the following symptoms after your blood patch:

- Nausea, vomiting, fever, chills.
- Numbness or tingling down your buttocks and/or legs
- Weakness in your legs
- New onset of severe pain.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact us at (949) 718-3600. Please call your doctor to schedule a follow-up appointment if you do not already have one.