

Post-dural puncture headache (PDPH)

PDPH is a headache that occurs when the cover around the spinal cord has been punctured during a spinal or epidural procedure. This cover is called the dura.

The puncture causes cerebral spinal fluid (CSF) to leak out. CSF cushions your spinal cord and brain. When the level of CSF decreases, a severe headache can develop.

The headache usually starts 1 or 2 days after the procedure and goes away in less than a week.

What are the symptoms of PDPH?

The headache can be a dull or throbbing head pain. In general, the headache is better when you lie flat and worse when you are sitting or standing. The pain also gets worse when you move your head, cough or sneeze.

You may also have these symptoms:

- nausea or upset stomach
- sensitivity to light
- dizziness
- ringing in the ears
- double vision
- neck and shoulder pain
- low back pain

What should I do if I have this headache?

- To ease your headache, lie flat as much as possible for at least 24 to 48 hours. It is not necessary to lie down all of the time.
- Drink plenty of fluids. Dehydration may worsen the headache.
- Use pain medication, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol[®]) or ibuprofen (Advil[®]). Follow the instructions on the package.
- Drinks with caffeine may help, but too much caffeine can cause irregular heart beats, anxiety and agitation.

What should I do if the headache does not get better?

- If you are staying in the hospital, tell your nurse.
- If you are at home, get medical help:
 - Patients of the Michael G. DeGroot Pain Clinic can call the clinic at 905-521-2100, ext. 44621.
 - Other patients can call the Department of Anesthesia at 905-521-2100, ext. 46698.

Outside of office hours:

- Call the hospital at 905-521-2100 and ask for “Paging”.
- Ask them to page the “Anesthesiologist on-call” at the same hospital where you had your procedure.