

Using epidural analgesia to relieve your pain

What is epidural analgesia?

- Analgesia is another word for pain relief. When you have an epidural, pain medication is put through a long, thin tube into a small space between the bones of your back. The medication blocks the pain.
 - Before you have an epidural, you will see a doctor called an Anesthesiologist. This doctor will talk with you about pain control. You and the doctor will decide if an epidural is a good way to control your pain. You may be asked to repeat what was said in your own words so that you feel comfortable with the epidural for pain relief.
 - The Acute Pain Service (APS), along with your doctors and nurses work together to make sure your pain is well controlled. The APS team can be contacted when needed.
 - Your nurse will be checking with you often to make sure that you are comfortable and will answer your questions about pain medicine and epidural analgesia.
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Steps to putting in an epidural:

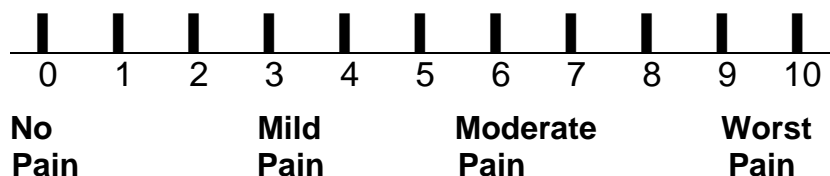
1. The Anesthesiologist cleans your back with an antiseptic solution.
2. Freezing medicine is put into the skin to numb the area. You may feel a bit of pressure.
3. A needle is placed in the correct space between the bones. A long thin tube, called a catheter, is put through the needle into the space.
4. The needle is then removed and the catheter stays in place.
5. The catheter is taped to your back, and secured near the front of your shoulder.
6. Pain medicine is given through the tube. You will not feel the catheter once it is in place. You will be able to lie on your back and move around.

What special care do I need with an epidural?

The nurse or doctor will regularly check your:

- pain control
- breathing, blood pressure and temperature
- ability to feel and move
- ability to pass urine

To understand how you are feeling, you will be asked to rate your pain on a scale.



You may also be asked to give your name and birthday to make sure that the medication is not too strong for you.

Are epidurals safe?

Epidurals have been used for many years for many different reasons. They are very safe, but there are possible side effects and complications.

Side effects include:

- numb or heavy legs
- itchininess
- nausea and vomiting
- dizziness
- low blood pressure
- extreme sleepiness
- trouble passing urine

These side effects can be treated, let your nurse know if you feel any of them.

Serious complications from epidurals are very rare, they include:

- a bad headache
- infection or bleeding where the needle was placed
- nerve damage



Safety First

Prevent falls!

When you have an epidural, it is not safe for you to get out of bed by yourself. Use your call bell and a nurse will come to help you. The nurse or therapist will help you get out of bed.

If your pain is not controlled or you have any questions or concerns about epidural analgesia, please talk with your nurse.

