

Having an Epidural After Surgery

What is an epidural?

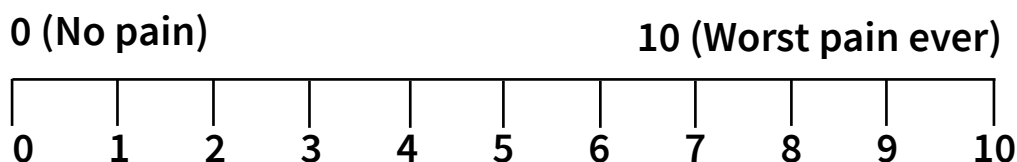
- An epidural is a way to give you pain medication after surgery.
- Before your surgery starts, the anesthesiologist (a doctor who puts you to sleep for your surgery) will put an epidural tube in your back. The tube is attached to a pump with a bag of pain or numbing medication. The pump sends the medication to the area around your spinal cord.

Why do I need 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 getting pain medication.
- An epidural can help you move better after your surgery.
- You may be more alert with an epidural than with other ways of getting pain medication. Being alert and having good pain control makes it easier to move after surgery, which is important for your recovery.

Will I still have pain with an epidural?

- You may still feel 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 to 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.



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 anesthetists and nurses who are specially trained to help people with their pain.

What are the possible side effects?

- Knowing about the risks and possible side effects of having an epidural can help you decide if it is right for you. Your doctor will talk with you about this and answer any questions you may have.
- Possible side effects include:
 - › Upset stomach
 - › Itchiness
 - › Sleepiness
 - › Breathing slower
 - › Trouble urinating (peeing): You may have a catheter (thin, hollow tube) in your bladder to drain your urine (pee)
- Please tell a member of your health care team if you have any of these side effects, so that we can help you manage them.
- **Please tell a member of your health care team if you have any other reactions to your pain medication.**
- Your health care team will also check if you are able to feel and move your legs.

How long will I have the epidural?

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

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here:
<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

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

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