

# Epidural – discharge advice for patients





## Your epidural information

**Epidural inserted on:**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Epidural removed on:**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

am / pm

### Patient identification sticker

(To be affixed by nursing staff)

Signed by registered nurse:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## The removal of your epidural

We have removed the epidural catheter (tube) from your back. Rarely, complications can occur after an epidural is removed, so we will be keeping a close check on you over the next few days. The nurses will continue to ask if you have any pain or any change in the feeling or strength in your arms and legs.

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## Infections

We will make sure that the area where the catheter was inserted is kept clean and dry. This is because, very rarely, an infection can develop at the site where the epidural was inserted.

The nurses will look for any early signs of infection, such as heat, pain and swelling. An infection can develop on the surface under the skin or more deeply close to the spinal cord and major nerves. This could be an abscess (a collection of pus) or meningitis.

These infections are very rare, but require urgent treatment with antibiotics and / or surgery to prevent the nerve injury becoming permanent.

## Haematomas (bruises)

There is a very small chance that blood may collect around the area where the epidural was inserted. It is known as an epidural haematoma or bruise. This bruise may press on a nerve or the spinal cord and damage it.

Occasionally, an urgent operation is needed to remove the haematoma and relieve the pressure to prevent the nerve injury becoming permanent. Again, this is rare.

## What you need to look for

For the first seven days after you leave hospital, it is important that you and


your carers look carefully for any sign of infection in the area where the epidural was inserted, or new symptoms, such as pain, changes in bladder and sensation and strength in limbs.

After the first seven days, please continue to keep an eye out for any symptoms that could suggest a complication with your epidural.

Symptoms to watch for:

- Severe, lasting redness or swelling around the area where the epidural was inserted. Note that minor swelling and redness is common, but should disappear a few days after removal.
- Pus (a yellow- or green-coloured ooze) from the area where the epidural was inserted.
- Fever.
- New, severe back pain near the area where the epidural was inserted.
- Changes in the feeling or strength in your arms and legs.
- Difficulty in passing urine (water) that you did not have before your surgery.

**If you become aware of any of the above, please go to your nearest accident and emergency department (A&E) and tell them that you have recently had an epidural. Take this leaflet with you.**



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## Who can I contact with questions or concerns?

If you have any questions or concerns about your epidural, please contact:

Ward

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on

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(Please ask your nurse to complete these details).

## How can I contact the pain management service?

### Royal Brompton Hospital

**020 7352 8121**, extension **2408**, or **bleep 7037** (for the out of hours on call anaesthetist, **bleep 1401**).

### Harefield Hospital

**01895 823 737**, extension **5538**, or **bleep 6144** (for the out of hours on call anaesthetist, **bleep 6308**).

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If you have any concerns about any aspect of the service you have received in hospital and feel unable to talk to those people responsible for your care, call the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS):

- Royal Brompton – 020 7349 7715
- Harefield Hospital – 01895 826 572

Alternatively, email [pals@rbht.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@rbht.nhs.uk). This is a confidential service.



A lifetime of specialist care

Royal Brompton Hospital  
Sydney Street  
London  
SW3 6NP  
Tel: 0330 12 88121

Harefield Hospital  
Hill End Road  
Harefield  
Middlesex  
UB9 6JH  
Tel: 0330 12 88121

Website: [www.rbht.nhs.uk](http://www.rbht.nhs.uk)

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Foundation Trust

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