
What is an epidural?

An epidural is:

- A way to give pain medicine to your child.
- Most often used for surgery of the chest, stomach, pelvis or legs.

Your child's surgeon and anesthesiologist (a doctor who specializes in pain and anesthesia) will decide if an epidural is best for your child.

What should I do to help prepare my child?

- Talk with your child about how the epidural can help. Be simple and tell the truth when you answer their questions.
- Talk with the care team about any special care for your child, such as not eating or drinking before surgery.

What will the epidural be like?

An anesthesiologist will place the epidural in the operating room (OR). They will:

- Put a catheter (a thin, soft, plastic tube) in your child's back. They may place it in the upper or lower back based on your child's needs.
- Connect the catheter to a pump that gives continuous pain medicine. The catheter can stay in place for several days to 1 week after surgery.

Your child may need a urine catheter if the epidural is placed in the lower back.

What medicines are used?

- Your child may get local anesthetics through the epidural. This type of medicine is like the numbing medicine used at the dentist.
- Your child may get other pain medicine through an I.V. (a thin, plastic tube placed in a vein). This may happen if your child's pain is not well-controlled by the epidural.

What happens after the epidural?

- The Pain Team will check on your child each day. Your child's nurse can reach them throughout the day and night.
- The team will check your child's pain and make medicine changes if needed.
- They will also check the dressing and catheter site to make sure the dressing is secure.
 - A secure dressing helps protect the catheter site from germs and infection.
 - The epidural will be removed if there is concern for infection.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Epidural, continued

- Your child may be able to get out of bed with the nurse's help once the team or physical therapist (PT) checks their leg strength. The epidural catheter is marked to identify it and taped in place so it is secure.
- Talk with your child's nurse or doctor if you have any questions or concerns.

When is the epidural catheter removed?

The epidural catheter is removed after your child:

- Is eating and drinking well.
- Can take pain medicine by mouth.

Most often, the anesthesiologist will remove the catheter in your child's room.

What are some common side effects?

Tell your child's nurse or doctor if your child has any of these:

- Itching
- Seems too sleepy
- Cannot urinate
- Weakness or numbness in the legs
- More weakness or numbness on one side of the body than the other side of the body

The goal of the epidural is to have a band of numbness where your child's incision (cut) is. Talk with your child's nurse or doctor if your child still has pain.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

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