



EPIDURAL BLOOD PATCH

What is an epidural blood patch and why is it helpful? An epidural blood patch is performed when a patient seems to be suffering from a spinal headache, which usually resulted from a tear or puncture (intentional or unintentional) of the dura (tissue layer) lining the spinal canal. An intentional hole is made when performing a spinal anesthetic or a spinal tap. It is thought that the leakage of spinal fluid through the hole results in the severe headache. There are many theories as to why or how an epidural blood patch works, but no single mechanism has been identified yet.

What happens during the procedure? The patient will be placed in a sitting position, on the stomach or on the side. The lower back will be cleansed with an antiseptic and then numbed. The doctor will place the needle into the epidural space. Then, some blood will be drawn from the arm and immediately injected into the back through the previously placed needle. During the injection, the patient will probably feel pressure in the back or in the head, but this will last only for a minute or two. The patient will need to lie flat, or near flat for about an hour to allow the blood to clot and "patch" the hole in the dura. The procedure will take up to 30 minutes.

What happens after the procedure? The patient will rest while a nurse monitors the blood pressure and pulse. The headache usually subsides within a short time after the injection. Afterwards, the patient will be instructed to go home and lay down for several more hours, and not to perform heavy lifting or extreme bending for two days.