



# GOING HOME AFTER HAVING AN EPIDURAL OR SPINAL

Severe complications following an epidural or spinal anaesthetic are extremely rare and include infection or a blood clot at the site of injection. Problems associated with them can generally be avoided when detected early.

**If you have any of the symptoms mentioned below contact the hospital as soon as possible.**

## Headache

There are many causes of headaches which should improve following rest, fluids and simple pain relief such as paracetamol. You can ask your Nurse or Midwife for these.

Contact the hospital if your headache:

- does not go away after you have rested, taken fluids or mild pain relievers, such as paracetamol
- gets worse while you are sitting or standing but feels better while you are lying down
- comes with other symptoms like neck stiffness or hearing changes (such as ringing or a blocked sensation) or problems with your eyes or fever/chills.

## Backache

It is common for a small area on your back at the procedure site to feel tender or bruised. This can last up to 1 week and should not affect normal activity. Simple pain relief may be helpful.

Spinal or epidural anaesthetics do not cause new long-term back pain.

Contact the hospital if you have pain in your back where you had the epidural or spinal injection, especially if:

- the pain is new or getting worse (for example, if the pain travels up the spine or down into the buttocks and legs)
- the area where the needle was inserted becomes inflamed (if the area is red, oozing or weeping)
- you are experiencing a fever or chills.

## Changed sensation in your lower body

After birth, numb patches are relatively common and are usually caused by direct pressure of the baby on the nerves in the pelvis during labour and delivery. Very occasionally it may be related to the anaesthetic and this usually resolves within weeks.

Contact the hospital if you feel any persistent or new changes in your buttocks or legs such as:

- weakness
- numbness
- pins and needles.

## For more information and advice

### Acute Pain Service

The Royal Women's Hospital  
Monday to Friday 8am to 4pm  
T: (03) 8345 2389

If the number is unattended leave a message on our voicemail.

If your call has not been answered within 4 hours please call the **after-hours** number below and ask to speak to the on-call Anaesthetic Registrar.

T: (03) 8345 2000