



Whittington Hospital Department of Anaesthesia

OBSTETRIC ANAESTHESIA

1. Advice after your labour epidural

You had an epidural inserted during your labour on ____/____. This section of the leaflet covers a few common points about what to expect while your epidural is in place, and what to expect after it is removed.

You may have weak legs for the next few hours while the epidural is running. You should, however, be able to continue moving them, and be able to lift your legs off the bed against gravity.

If you cannot “straight leg raise” (lift the heel of your foot off the bed) at any point **PLEASE TELL YOUR MIDWIFE** as the anaesthetist may need to review whether your epidural is working properly.

What else to expect:

- Your catheter will remain in until you can walk safely to the toilet once your epidural is removed.
- You may have a small amount of bruising around the site of the epidural, similar to when we put in a drip or take a blood sample. Epidurals are not, however, associated with ongoing back pain – it is much more likely that if you experience this it is related to your pregnancy or labour.
- We aim for a member of the anaesthetic team to review you within 24 hours to check that you are not developing any complications and to answer any questions you may have.

Uncommon problems after epidurals that you should call us about:

- If at any time in the next few days, including after your discharge from hospital, you develop new leg weakness, new severe back pain or fever.
- Approximately 1 in 100 women with an epidural will develop a bad headache – please let the midwifery staff know if this happens to you.

If you experience any of these problems, **please call the MATERNITY ASSESSMENT UNIT on 0207 288 5880.**



2. Advice after your operation under regional anaesthetic

You had a procedure on ___/___ at ___:___ AM/PM with a spinal or epidural (a “regional”) anaesthetic. This section of the leaflet covers a few questions you may have about what to expect while you recover from your regional anaesthetic.

The last dose of local anaesthetic you received was at ___:___ AM/PM

During the operation you will not have been able to move your legs much due to the anaesthetic. We expect you to be able to move them again within four hours. If you cannot “straight leg raise” (lift the heel of your foot off the bed) with either leg by ___:___ AM/PM (four hours after your last dose of anaesthetic) **PLEASE TELL YOUR MIDWIFE OR NURSE, as an anaesthetist may need to come back to review you.**

What else to expect:

- Some women experience shivering and shaking after this type of anaesthetic – it is normal and settles within an hour or two.
- You may feel itchy. This is due to a pain killing drug we used during the anaesthetic and is a well-recognised side effect. If the itching is particularly bothersome, please let us know.
- You have been prescribed pain relief to take regularly - and extra painkillers if needed. Everything is safe to take when breastfeeding. If you feel that the regular medication is not adequately controlling your pain, please ask your midwife for some *Oramorph* (morphine).
- Your catheter will stay in until you regain enough strength in your legs to get to the toilet safely.
- We aim for a member of the anaesthetic team to review you within 24 hours to check that you are not developing any complications and to answer any questions you may have.

Uncommon problems after regional anaesthesia you should tell or call us about:

- If at any time in the next few days, including after your discharge from hospital, you develop new leg weakness, back pain or fever.
- Approximately 1 in 100 women who have regional anaesthesia will develop a bad headache – please let the midwifery staff know if this happens to you.

If you experience any of the above issues, please call the **MATERNITY ASSESSMENT UNIT** on **0207 288 5880**.



Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please contact us on 020 7288 3182. We will try our best to meet your needs.

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