**Epidural Blood Patch**

**What is an epidural blood patch?**

An epidural blood patch is an outpatient procedure where a small amount of your blood is used to seal leaking spinal fluid associated with epidurals, lumbar punctures, and spontaneous CSF (cerebrospinal fluid) leaks.

**Why is an epidural blood patch done?**

A CSF leak decreases the pressure of the spinal fluid in the spine. This low pressure produces a spinal headache which causes severe pain with standing or sitting but is relieved with lying flat. Injecting your blood into the epidural space at the level of the leak creates a patch. This will stop the leak of spinal fluid, restore normal pressure, and relieve your headache.

**Preparing for the procedure**

You will receive a pre-procedure phone call from a nurse to review the following information:

1. There may be certain over the counter medications you will be asked to stop prior to your procedure, such as herbal supplements, vitamins, or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory agents (NSAIDS) like ibuprofen (Advil®), or naproxen (Aleve®).
2. There will be certain prescribed medications you will have to stop that require approval from your doctor, such as aspirin, Plavix®, warfarin (Coumadin®). **Please do not stop these medications until notified by your doctor or our nursing staff.**
3. There may be medications you will need to take prior to your procedure for specific drug allergies, such as X-ray (contrast) dye.
4. Labs will need to be drawn prior to your procedure if you are on medications such as warfarin (Coumadin®).
5. Drink plenty of fluids the day before your procedure to keep hydrated.
6. You cannot drive yourself home. Your procedure will need to be rescheduled if you are unable to find a driver to take you home after your procedure.
7. **Day of Procedure:**
   - Do **not** eat for 6 hours prior to your arrival time. Two hours prior to your arrival time you may drink clear liquids (water, apple juice, or black coffee).
   - Medications may be taken at any time with a few sips of water.
   - Take your routine medications on the day of the procedure unless instructed otherwise by your doctor or our nursing staff.

8. You must be healthy on the day of the procedure. Please call the number below at least 24 hours prior to your procedure to reschedule if you:
   - Have an infection and/or have recently taken antibiotics
   - Have cold or flu symptoms or are feeling sick
   - Have any rashes, wounds, or skin lesions
   - Have a fever greater than 100.4°F

9. **Call (608) 265-1770** if you need to cancel, reschedule or have any questions.

**What to Expect:**

Before the blood patch, you will be taken to the pre-procedure area. You will change into a gown. Vital signs will be taken and two IVs will be started. One is for administering medications and fluids, and the other is for drawing your blood. Questions will be asked regarding your medical history, current health status, and current medications. You will be asked to complete pre-procedure paperwork. A member of the health care team will provide a brief description of the procedure, explain possible complications, answer any questions, and have you sign a consent form. Your family and friends are welcome to be with you before and after the procedure.

The blood patch is done in a procedure room that has an X-ray machine. You will lie face down on a table. Pillows will be used to help position you and keep you comfortable. Your vital signs will be monitored throughout the procedure. IV medication for relaxation will be given if needed. You will remain awake throughout the procedure. Your back will be cleaned and covered with a sterile drape. Using the X-ray machine, a thin needle will be guided to the site of the spinal fluid leak. X-ray (contrast) dye will be injected through the needle, confirming placement. A small amount of blood will be drawn from your arm and immediately injected into your back. You will be asked to lie still and to let your doctor know if you feel any back or leg pain. The procedure takes about 30 minutes.

When the procedure is completed you will return to your room for approximately 30 minutes. Your vital signs and pain level will be monitored. Your doctor may have you lay flat at first, and then slowly sit up. You will be provided a beverage and a light snack. Your nurse will also review discharge information and a pain log that you will need to complete over the next two weeks.
Your driver will take you home. You may not drive for 24 hours. If you received sedation medication during the procedure, you should not make important personal or business decisions until the next day.

Once home, you should take it easy. Your back may feel stiff and sore for a few days. Avoid any heavy lifting or intense physical activity for 24 hours. Drink plenty of fluids. No swimming or tub baths for 24 hours. Taking a shower is okay.

**Watch for signs of infection:**
- Fever greater than 100.4°F by mouth for 2 readings taken 4 hours apart
- Increased redness, swelling around the blood patch site
- Any drainage from the site
- Severe stiff neck or problems thinking clearly

**If you have any new symptoms or signs of infection, please call:**

Dr Sehgal – (608) 263-9550  
Dr Leonard – (608) 265-3207  
Dr Simhan – (608) 263-9550  
Dr Holz – (608) 265-3207  
Dr Abd-Elsayed (608) 263-9550  
Dr Poliak-Tunis (608) 263-9550

After hours, nights and weekends, call (608)-262-0486 or if you live out of the area, call 1-800-323-8942. Ask for the rehabilitation doctor on call. Leave your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back.