

Children having an epidural

Children's Hospital

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Information for Parents

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Introduction

We know that coming into hospital can be an anxious time for you and your child, especially if they are in pain. This leaflet explains one way of managing pain during and after an operation. This is known as having an epidural.

What medicines are used for an epidural?

We use a local anaesthetic (numbing medicine). This medicine is given continuously by a special pump at a rate carefully worked for your child's weight. Sometimes another medicine is added to the local anaesthetic to make it more effective.

How do epidurals work?

Your child will first have a general anaesthetic, so they will be asleep. A very thin plastic tube (catheter) is inserted into your child's back through a needle into a space outside the spinal canal. This is where the nerves are that cause pain in that area. This tube will then be taped to your child's back to allow pain relief medicine to be given safely and continuously through a special pump.

How do we know that it's working?

We will closely monitor your child while they are having an epidural. Their legs may feel heavy or have a tingling feeling. This is normal and a good sign that the epidural is working. It allows your child to move around in the bed and cough with minimal pain.

We will assess and record your child's pain. We have ways to help children tell us about their pain levels.

Your child will be given other pain relief such as paracetamol and ibuprofen. Research has shown that using different types of pain relief together is more effective.

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Are there any side effects?

Whilst on the epidural your child may feel:

- Sleepy
- Itchy
- Feel sick (nausea) or be sick (vomiting)

Other rare complications include:

- Minor headaches
- Numbness
- Backache
- Nerve damage
- Infection (epidural abscess)
- Blood clot (epidural haematoma)

A specialist doctor called an anaesthetist will discuss the risks, benefits, and side effects with you before your child's operation.

It is important to ask your child how they are feeling and to let the nurse know. The nurses will also be regularly checking for side effects and can give other drugs to help if needed. Sometimes the epidural does not work because the catheter is not in the right place. If this happens the epidural will be taken out and your child will be given some other means of pain control, such as morphine.

Most children will have a urinary catheter to collect their pee (urine) while the epidural is in place.

When will the epidural be stopped?

This may depend on your child's pain levels, what type of surgery they have had and/or their medical condition. The standard time for the epidural to run is between 48 to 72 hours. Once the epidural has been stopped, your child will continue to receive other pain relief, such as paracetamol and ibuprofen.

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
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