

Patient instructions following an epidural blood patch

Treatment of Common Symptoms after a Patch

1. Backache. It is common to have back pain or soreness near sites of injection or in your legs/arms for the first 1-to-7 days after the procedure. This is usually worst in the first 24 hours after the blood patch and then improves with time. You can use local heat or ice on your back and take over the counter acetaminophen (Tylenol) if you are uncomfortable. Bending your knees or changing the side you are lying on may help. Your doctor may prescribe a different pain medication if your pain is moderate in intensity or greater.

You should not experience loss of sensation in your legs, lose control of your bowel or bladder, or have excruciating pain (i.e. worst pain imaginable); if any of these things happen, consult your doctor right away.

2. Headache. It is common to have a headache related to increased cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) pressure after a patch procedure. These headaches are called “rebound high pressure” headaches. They are usually recognized because they feel different than low-pressure headaches. Specifically, rebound high pressure headaches are typically worse with lying down and sometimes can wake you up from sleep. This is often the opposite of low-pressure headaches, which are better when lying down for most people. The location of pain may also be different than your headache prior to the patch. Rebound headaches can also cause nausea or vomiting. High pressure headaches are also typically worst in the first few days after the patch, and then get better, but can last longer or come on later in some people. If severe, your doctor may prescribe medications that can be used to treat this specific type of headache.

Home care instructions:

For backache:

- Take over the counter acetaminophen (Tylenol) as needed per the label instructions.
- Take other medications prescribed by your doctor as directed
- Other _____

For rebound headache:

- Elevate your head to 30 degrees. You may keep your head at this position if you have rebound high pressure headaches, even if you were told by your doctor to try to lay flat.
- Take Diamox (acetazolamide) 500 mg (i.e. two 250 mg tablets) for rebound high pressure headaches that develop the night after your procedure and are 5/10 in pain intensity or greater. Discuss your symptoms with your doctor the next day to determine if you need to continue this medication, at what dose, and for how long.
- Other _____

For nausea:

- Take one tablet of Zofran (4 mg) every 8 hours, as needed for nausea.
- Other _____

Activity Instructions

For the rest of today (the day of your patch) and all day tomorrow: Lay flat in bed as much as possible. You may get up briefly to use the bathroom, but try to take your meals in bed. You may take a quick shower in the morning. No lifting greater than 10lbs. Avoid strenuous bending, lifting or twisting.

In the 1st month: You may resume light activity as tolerated. No lifting greater than 10lbs. No intentional exercise. Avoid strenuous bending, lifting or twisting.

In months 2-3: Gradual return to light exercise as tolerated. These activities may include low-impact exercises such as walking, riding a stationary/recumbent bicycle, or light use of an elliptical machine. Avoid strenuous bending, lifting or twisting. No lifting greater than 20lbs.

Beyond 3 months: Continue to avoid very strenuous bending, lifting or twisting activities. This includes activities such as Pilates and yoga, and may also include other activities such as tennis or golf.

If your low-pressure headache symptoms return after the epidural blood patch, discuss with your doctor whether you need to continue these activity restrictions.

Contact numbers:

The neuroradiology nurse is available for questions during business hours at 919-684-7770

If you have an urgent question after normal business hours, call the on-call radiology resident at 919-681-4422. They can help contact your Neuroradiology doctor if needed.

For all medical emergencies, call 911 or go immediately to the closest emergency room.