



University of Michigan
C.S. Mott Children's Hospital

Epidural Block

What is an Epidural Block?

An epidural block is a type of nerve block that is used to control pain during surgery in the chest, back, belly or legs. It is one of the methods for pain control offered to children. The first step in the process is to give the child a sedative medication to calm the nervous system. After the child is asleep or sedated, the clinician places a thin, soft plastic tube (catheter) into the back. A special pump pushes anesthetic medication through the tube. This medicine decreases the feeling of pain from the nerves in the area of the surgery, providing several days of pain relief. You will be able to talk to your surgeon and anesthesiologist before surgery to decide if this option is best for your child.

An anesthesiologist is a medical doctor who specializes in giving drugs to control pain before, during, and after surgery. **An anesthetic** is a medication to control pain during a medical procedure or surgery.

Should I choose this for my child?

Epidural blocks target the area of surgery and decrease the amount of anesthetic gases and narcotic pain medication (such as morphine) your child may receive during and after an operation. The amount of anesthetic medicine can be adjusted to meet the comfort level of your child. This can shorten the wake-up time and may reduce the side effects (such as nausea and vomiting or sedation) during recovery. Medical staff closely monitors children who received an epidural block until the catheter is removed.

What will my child feel afterwards?

The epidural block will allow your child to feel comfortable when she wakes up from surgery. During this time your child may:

- Feel heavy, tingly or weak in the legs.
- Begin to take oral pain medications before the catheter is removed.

How will I care for my child after the surgery?

1. A pain nurse will monitor and manage the epidural block and make changes based on your child's comfort level.
2. Your child may sit, walk or crawl with supervision.
3. Start oral pain medications as instructed.
4. The Pediatric Pain Service and your surgeon will be available if you have any questions after the surgery.

What are the side effects of epidural blocks?

Below is a table of possible side effects and how often they may occur:

Side Effect	How Common
Headache	Rare (1 in 1,700)
Nerve Injury	Rare (less than 1 in 1,700)
Serious reaction to anesthetic medicine	Extremely rare (1 in 10,000)

The Pediatric Anesthesia Team is committed to improving your child's surgical experience. The anesthesiologist will answer all your questions about epidural blocks before surgery. Our goal is to decrease fear and anxiety, and provide sensitive and understanding pain-control care. We are devoted to educating all staff caring for your child.

Disclaimer: This document is for informational purposes only and is not intended to take the place of the care and attention of your personal physician or other professional medical services. Talk with your doctor if you have Questions about individual health concerns or specific treatment options.

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