

Information for Patients

Spinal Anaesthetic

This leaflet gives you information about pain relief following a spinal anaesthetic.

Is a spinal the same as an epidural?

No. They both involve an injection of local anaesthetic between the bones of the spine. The injections work in a slightly different way.

What is a spinal?

A spinal is an injection that you have once. It puts local anaesthetic close to the nerves. This blocks pain signals and reduces pain. The numbing effect lasts between 1 hour 30 minutes to 4 hours.

When is a spinal anaesthetic used?

A spinal anaesthetic may be safer for you than a general anaesthetic. This depends on the type of operation and your current health problems.

Do I stay awake?

Before the operation you can decide whether you want to stay fully awake or be lightly sedated. We will put up a screen so that you cannot see the operation.

How is a spinal done?

1. We use a needle to put a thin plastic tube (cannula) into a vein in your hand or arm. This is to give you fluids.
2. For the spinal you will either sit on the side of the bed with your feet on a low stool or lie on your side, curled up with your knees tucked up towards your chest.
3. Before we give the injection, we will numb the skin.
4. We will put the local anaesthetic into your back and remove the needle.





What will I feel?

Usually, a spinal should not be too uncomfortable. It should only take a few minutes to work.

1. The local anaesthetic stings for a short time.
2. You may feel discomfort in your back as the needle or catheter is put in.
3. You may have an electric shock-like feeling or pain when the needle or catheter is put in. If this happens, try to stay still and tell the anaesthetist straight away.
4. A feeling of warmth and numbness slowly spreads. You may still be able to feel touch, pressure and movement.
5. With a spinal your legs will feel heavy and become more difficult to move.

Can anyone have a spinal?

No. A spinal may not always be possible if the risk of complications is too high.

The anaesthetist will ask you if:

- a) you are taking blood thinning medicines, such as Warfarin, Clopidogrel.
- b) you have problems with blood clotting
- c) you have an allergy to local anaesthetics.
- d) you have bad arthritis or problems with your spine.
- e) you have an infection in your back.

Care after an operation with a spinal

1. The nurse will make sure the numb area is protected from pressure and injury until feeling returns.
2. It takes 1 hour 30 minutes to 4 hours for the feeling to return. You should tell the staff about any concerns or worries you may have.
3. As the feeling returns, you may have some tingling in the skin. You may feel some pain from the operation site. You should ask for more pain relief before the pain becomes too bad.
4. Ask for help when you first get out of bed.

Side effects and problems

1. Not able to pee. The spinal affects the nerves that supply the bladder. You may have a tube (catheter) to drain the pee away. You should be able to pee as normal after the spinal wears off
2. Low blood pressure
3. Itching
4. Feeling or being sick
5. Pain, backache or bruising at injection site
6. Pain relief that does not work. Other pain relief will be available if the spinal does not work
7. Short term or permanent nerve damage
8. Headache

If you have any side effects, tell the nurse.

You can talk about any of these risks with the anaesthetist. They can give you more information.

Acute Pain Nurses

The nurses are available Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 3.00pm. They will come to see you after the operation if you have an epidural or are having problems controlling your pain.

Further information is available from; sath.pain.nurses@nhs.net

This leaflet has been created using information from the Royal College of Anaesthetists information booklets, which were written by patients, patient representatives and anaesthetists, working together.

Further information is available from:

Feedback

We appreciate and encourage feedback which can be shared in a number of ways through the hospital website. Scan the QR code to give feedback. www.sath.nhs.uk/patients-visitors/patient-experience/feedback-hub/



Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS will act on your behalf when handling patient and family concerns, they can also help you get support from other local or national agencies. PALS, is a confidential service.

Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, Tel: 0800 783 0057 or 01743 261691

Princess Royal Hospital, Tel: 01952 282888

Other Sources of Information

NHS 111

A fast and easy way to get the right help, whatever the time. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.

111 (free from a landline or mobile) www.nhs.uk

Self Help & Support Groups

A selection of websites providing access to good quality health information, local organisations and community groups is available from the library. www.library.sath.nhs.uk/find/patients/

Information in Other Languages or Formats

If you require this information in a different way such as easy read, a different language, larger print, audio or braille please tell a member of staff or contact the Patient Experience Team;

sath.patientexperience@nhs.net or 01743 261000 ext. 2503.

Your information

Information about you and your healthcare is held by the NHS. You can find out more about how we hold your information and how it is used on our website: www.sath.nhs.uk

Website: www.sath.nhs.uk

Information Produced by: Acute Pain Team

Date of Publication: September 2024

Due for Review on: September 2027

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Version: 2

ID: MC/219

