

What is a post-dural puncture headache?

A post-dural puncture headache (PDPH) is a complication from having a spinal or epidural. It is caused by a hole in the lining that surrounds your spinal cord. There is fluid inside this lining that bathes your spinal cord and brain. This fluid can leak through the hole resulting in a headache.

PDPH only happens to 1% of patients having an epidural or spinal. This does not involve any damage to your brain or spinal cord. The headache often begins 24-48 hours after having a spinal or epidural and usually lasts one week. Although the pain may be severe, there are several treatment options to help.



Additional instructions:

Kingston Health Sciences Centre

Centre des sciences de
la santé de Kingston

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Tel: 613.549.6666
www.KingstonHSC.ca

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Kingston Health
Sciences Centre

Centre des sciences de
la santé de Kingston



Post dural
puncture
headache:
Patient information



Hôpital
Hotel Dieu
Hospital



Hôpital Général de
Kingston General
Hospital

What symptoms should I expect?

- A headache that gets worse when you sit or stand
- The headache may involve the front and/or back of your head
- Neck pain or stiffness
- Nausea and vomiting
- Double vision, light sensitivity

What are my treatment options?

Conservative management:

- Bed rest
- Hydration
- Caffeinated drinks
- Tylenol and Advil

Procedures performed by your anesthesiologist may include:

- Epidural Blood Patch
- Sphenopalatine ganglion block

Epidural blood patch (EBP)

The procedure is similar to a regular epidural except a small amount of blood is drawn from your arm and is then injected into the epidural space.

The headache will resolve for 75% of people after one epidural blood patch. The epidural blood patch will not take away the headache in a small number of people.

Sphenopalatine ganglion block

This procedure involves inserting cotton-tipped swabs in your nose, similar to a COVID-19 test. Although not as effective as the EBP, it does not involve needles and may prevent the need for an epidural blood patch in 60% of patients.

When should I get help?

- If you had an epidural or spinal and have a headache that lasts longer than 7 days
- At any time, if you are having difficulty coping (difficulty standing, eating, or taking care of yourself or your baby) because of a severe headache

To get quick treatment, you should contact labour and delivery at Kingston Health Sciences Centre:

613-549-6666 ext. 2315

If you experience:

- **Fever**
- **Drowsiness**
- **New Symptoms**
- **Any other concerns**

Present to Labour and Delivery or the nearest emergency department for immediate assessment.