Epidural Anesthesia

An epidural delivers medicine through a small flexible tube, called a catheter, in the lower back to provide pain relief. It may also be used for procedures in the abdomen, lower back, legs or feet.

How to Position for Epidural Pain Relief

Two positions are used to open up the space in the lower back the epidural is placed. Your nurse will help you get into position.

- **Left Side**
  
  Lie on your left side. Bring your knees up to your stomach to round your lower back. A towel may be placed under your hip for stability.

- **Leaning Over**
  
  Sit on the side of your bed and lean over a table to round your back.

Placement of the Epidural

- Your lower back is cleaned with an antibacterial soap. Then a numbing medicine is injected into this area of the lower back.

- **Hold very still. Breathe slowly and deeply.** The doctor will put a needle attached to a tube (catheter) into the area that is numbed.
• The needle is then removed from your lower back. The thin tube stays in place and is ready to deliver medicine.

• A small test dose of medicine is given. Your response to the epidural will be checked.

• The epidural is secured with a protective cover that goes up the back to hold it in place.

Epidural Safety
Tell your doctor if you have any of these health problems before getting an epidural.

• Allergic reaction to anesthesia
• Bleeding problems
• Blood pressure problems
• Infection near the needle insertion site
• Severe headache from anesthesia
• Neurological disorders, including seizures
• Nerve damage
• Any lower back surgery
• Drug abuse (cocaine, heroin)

Side Effects
• Your legs may feel slightly numb, but will be able to move them. You may be asked to stay in bed.

• A temporary drop in blood pressure may occur. This can be treated with IV fluids or medicine.

• More serious side effects, such as severe headache, bleeding around the spine, allergic reaction or infection in the spine are possible, but rare.

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have any questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.