

# Discharge Instructions: Blood Patch After a Spinal Tap



You had a procedure called a blood patch. This sheet will help you better understand this treatment. It also covers how to take care of yourself afterward. If you have any questions or concerns, talk with your healthcare provider. They are here to help.

## What is a blood patch?

A blood patch uses your own blood to stop a leak of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF). CSF fills the space around the brain and spinal cord. This clear fluid acts like a cushion. During a spinal tap or lumbar puncture, a healthcare provider used a needle to take a small sample of CSF. Most of the time, the needle hole after a spinal tap closes by itself. But sometimes it doesn't, leading to a CSF leak.

A CSF leak can cause a mild to severe headache. The pain is often worse when standing or sitting up. You may also have:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Headaches, especially when standing up
- Neck stiffness
- Dizziness
- Hearing problems
- Double or blurry vision

Other treatments like rest and medicines may sometimes help ease the headache. If not, a blood patch can be used.

## How a blood patch works

Your healthcare provider drew a small amount of your blood and injected it near the needle hole for the spinal tap. As the blood clots, it seals the CSF leak. You may feel better within minutes after this treatment. Or it may take a few days for the headache and other symptoms to go away.

## What to do after a blood patch

As you recover from this treatment, follow all your healthcare provider's instructions. When at home:

- Rest lying down for the next 12 to 24 hours. Try not to stand or sit up for long periods of time. You can get up to eat and go to the bathroom.
- Drink lots of fluids for the next few days. Caffeine may help ease the headache. Unless told otherwise, you may have coffee or another caffeinated drink.
- Take your medicines as directed. Your provider may give you medicine for nausea or pain. Some people have back pain for a while after this treatment.
- Don't do any strenuous activity, including lifting heavy objects, for at least 24 hours.

## What the risks of a blood patch are

All procedures have risks. The risks of a blood patch include:

- Back pain
- Bruising under the skin
- Infection
- Nerve damage

## When to call

If at any time you have these symptoms, call right away:

- Numbness or tingling of the legs
- Problems peeing
- Confusion or trouble thinking
- Loss of consciousness

## When to call your healthcare provider

Reach out to your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these:

- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as advised by your provider
- Signs of infection, such as redness, bleeding, or pus near the injection site
- Symptoms that don't get better or get worse
- New symptoms

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