

Management of a suspected epidural haematoma

Epidural haematoma is a rare but potentially devastating complication of epidural anaesthesia / analgesia. It has also been reported as a complication of spinal anaesthesia. The haematoma may exert pressure on the spinal cord or cauda equina and if this is not relieved permanent paraplegia will result.

The most useful **sign** prompting a suspicion of epidural haematoma is the development of **new or increasing motor block (leg weakness)**. The patient may also complain of **back ache**.

Urgency:

If an epidural haematoma is suspected, **imaging** of the spinal cord must take place within **4 hours**. Paraplegia will result if haematoma is not diagnosed and **treated** within **12 hours**.

A suspected epidural haematoma requires urgent imaging and advice from a consultant anaesthetist should be sought early

