

# A patient's experience of an Epidural Blood Patch

by Clare Joy



[www.csfleak.info/profiles/clarejoy](http://www.csfleak.info/profiles/clarejoy)

Winter pressures meant that my first planned blood patch was delayed on numerous occasions and I had to re-present to the hospital every day for a few days in a row until there was a theatre available. Finally the day came where the promised slot wasn't cancelled or bumped. Before I was brought to the theatre a nurse took a blood sample to check for infection or clotting problems as this would mean the blood patch couldn't go ahead. After some time an anaesthetist came and ran through a quick consent detailing the risks which I quickly signed as I was so eager at that stage to proceed. I was brought to theatre where I remember they explained that everything had to be done a certain way to ensure that no infection was introduced into my back. The anaesthetist and the anaesthetic technician took care to not touch anything that wasn't sterile after they gloved up. A nurse attached electrodes to my chest, attached a blood pressure cuff to my arm and a pulse oximeter to my finger and asked that I lay on my side with my back on the edge of the trolley and my knees bent but not too close to my chest. Small areas on my left arm and back were wiped down with an antiseptic solution. The anaesthetic technician inserted a cannula in my right hand and gave me a sedative so that I was relaxed but still conscious. He then inserted a needle into my left arm ready to draw blood to give to the anaesthetist.

The anaesthetist administered some local anaesthetic to my back (which didn't work very well due to my connective tissue issues) and proceeded to place the spinal needle in my lower back around my L3 vertebrae. This hurt and was very unpleasant but didn't compare to my head pain so I congratulated myself on coping. When the doctor pushed the blood through it I immediately felt immense pressure that quickly became painful. As we neared our target of 20ml the pain grew too much and I started to get shooting nerve pain down my right leg.

At this point I cried out and the doctor said we had to stop as the description of my pain meant a nerve had been irritated and that it would be unwise to continue. I agreed as I really couldn't have managed anymore but we were both happy that we had gotten so much in. I didn't feel any immediate relief of head pain or resolution of tinnitus like I had read others experienced and I was really worried that it didn't work.

Afterwards I was told to lie down flat in bed for two hours but that was all they could offer me as I was on a day ward and it was already 5pm by the time I got back to the ward. I returned home and stayed in bed for three days. My back pain was so bad that I couldn't stand for long even if I wanted to get up out of bed. I used painkillers liberally and the nerve pain down my leg finally abated by day four. On day four I felt like I could sit up for a while and after ten minutes noticed that my head pain had not returned. I was ecstatic! It almost felt too good to be true so I rested for another few days and each time I sat up to eat I could do so without the pain returning. As I recovered from the blood patch I was up for longer and longer but unfortunately my luck ran out and I was bitterly disappointed to learn that my new found freedom had a limit – four hours. After four hours I was back where I started. I was, to put it mildly, devastated. The road to recovery with CSF leaks is definitely challenging!

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