

Discharge advice following a spinal anaesthetic

Your spinal information

Spinal administered on:

Date:

Time:

During your treatment at The Royal Marsden you were given a spinal anaesthetic. Complications are rare but can occur following a spinal injection. The nurses will have monitored you closely during your hospital stay to check for any early signs of complications. If you are discharged home earlier than 72 hours after your spinal injection, you will need to continue to self-monitor for the following potential complications at home.

All complications are rare (data suggests 1 in 50,000-1 in 100,000 risk).

Infections

We have made sure that the area where the spinal was inserted has been kept clean. Very rarely, an infection can develop at this site. The nurses will have checked for any early signs of infection, such as heat, pain and swelling. An infection can develop on the surface, under the skin or more deeply, close to the spinal cord and major nerves. This could be an abscess (a collection of pus) or meningitis.

These infections are very rare but require urgent treatment with antibiotics and /or surgery to prevent the nerve injury becoming permanent.

Haematomas (bruises)

There is a very small chance that blood may collect around the area where the spinal anaesthetic was inserted (close to the spinal cord and nerves). This is known as a haematoma or bruise. The bruise may press on a nerve or the spinal cord and damage it. Occasionally, an urgent operation is needed to remove the haematoma and relieve the pressure to prevent the injury becoming permanent. Again, this is rare.

Things to look out for at home

Once you are back home, it is important that you and your carers continue to look out for any symptoms for 72 hours from the time the spinal anaesthetic was administered.



Watch out for:

- Severe, lasting redness or swelling around the area where the spinal anaesthetic was inserted (minor swelling and redness is common, but should disappear a few days after the injection)
- Pus (a yellow or green-coloured ooze) from the area where the spinal anaesthetic was inserted
- Fever
- New, severe back pain near the area where the spinal anaesthetic was inserted
- Changes in the feeling or strength in your arms and legs, such as numbness, weakness, heaviness, pins and needles
- Difficulty in passing urine and/or opening your bowels that you did not have before your surgery
- A new or different headache that is worse when you stand up and/or a stiff neck.

If you become aware of any of the above symptoms, please go to your nearest Accident and Emergency department (A&E) and tell them that you have recently had a spinal anaesthetic. Take this leaflet with you along with *all* your medications.

Contact details

If you have any *urgent* questions or concerns about your spinal anaesthetic (see guidance above) please contact:

The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline: 020 8915 6899

(available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

