Anesthesia Epidural Injections

What you need to know

VETERINARY MEDICAL CENTER
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What is an Epidural?

- An epidural is a type of anesthesia that provides effective pain management during procedures involving the abdomen (or belly), hips, and hind legs.
- An epidural provides optimal pain relief with fewer side effects compared to medications given intravenously.

How is an Epidural Given?

- The epidural is given once your pet is asleep under general anesthesia.
- We will clip a 2x2 inch area of hair over the lower back or tail base, clean the skin, and insert a sterile needle near the spine of your pet to deliver the medicine.

What Drugs are Used?

One or two drugs will be given to numb the nerves and provide pain relief, which can include opioid medications such as morphine , or local anesthetics.

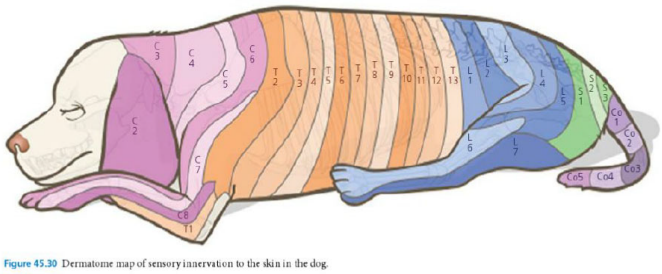
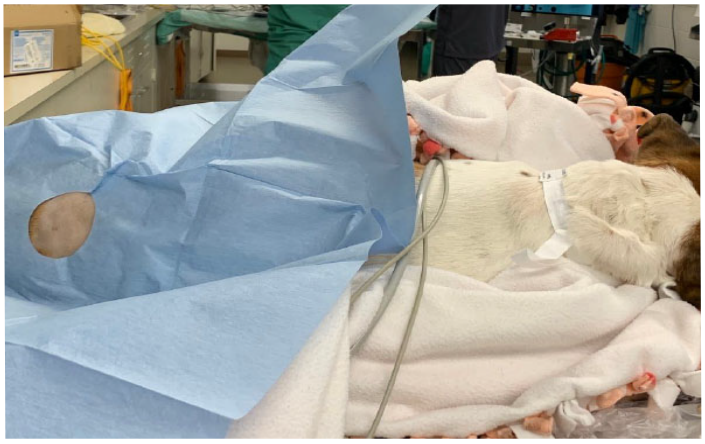


Figure 45.30 Dermatome map of sensory innervation to the skin in the dog.

Picture 2. Blue, green, and purple areas are the main body parts benefiting from pain control from an epidural.



Picture 1. An anesthetized dog who is being prepared for an epidural.

What are the most common side effects?

Side effects can last up to 24-hours after the procedure. They may include:

- Difficulty walking
- Difficulty reaching a water or food bowl
- May experience an inability to urinate
- Itchy on hind limbs or lower back

Some other side effects may be:

- Delayed hair regrowth
- Hair regrowth of different texture, length, and color

Concerned about your pet's anesthesia? Ask to speak to one of our Board Certified Anesthesiologists.

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What care will my pet need at home?

For up to 24-hours after receiving an epidural, your pet may need assistance for the following activities:

- Mobility
- Reaching their food and water
- Bathroom breaks

Contact your primary care veterinarian if:

- Your pet does not urinate after 24-hours
- Your pet's mobility is still affected after 24-hours
- Your pet is continuously looking, licking, or itching the site of an injection

What are the risks of an epidural?

In general, epidurals are safe but not risk free. We monitor your pet closely and will treat any side effects immediately and safely. Risks include:

- Low blood pressure
- Infection
- Allergic reaction
- Ineffective block
- Intravascular injection
- Nerve damage (this is extremely rare)

When should my pet not get an epidural?

If your pet has any of the following conditions, they will not receive an epidural:

- Skin problems
- Clotting disorders
- Brain or spine disease/trauma
- Abnormal anatomy
- Bloodborne infection
- Low blood pressure
- Some types of cancer

If you would like more information, don't hesitate to contact the University of Minnesota Veterinary Medical Center, Anesthesia and Pain Medicine Service at 612-626-8387.

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