

DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS FOLLOWING SPINAL OR EPIDURAL ANESTHESIA

You have had spinal or epidural anesthesia, and the effects can last for many hours. A responsible adult **must accompany** you home (even if travelling by taxi).

Care At Home

Follow these instructions for the first 24 hours after the procedure:

- A responsible adult must stay with you to monitor how you feel and help you
- Avoid activities that require coordination or decision making. This includes driving a car or bicycle, operating heavy machinery, or signing legal documents.
- Avoid alcohol and recreational drugs.
- Avoid vigorous activity and heavy lifting.
- Follow the instructions from your care team about all medications.

Possible side effects over the next 1-2 days:

- Headache or stiff neck - for more information, see below.
- You may feel dizzy - lie down to see if this helps.
- Sensitivity to bright light - avoid bright lights, wear sunglasses when outside or rest in a darkened room.
- Nausea or vomiting - if you have medication for nausea, take as directed.
Try small sips of water or clear soup. You may want to eat small amounts of bland foods like crackers or toast.

If you get a headache:

- Increase your intake of fluids – try to drink at least 4 cups of fluid per day.
- Take Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) as directed on the label (do not take this medication if you have allergies or a sensitivity to Acetaminophen).
- Avoid bright lights and noise.

- Lying flat is usually more comfortable. The headache may only be present when you sit or stand.
- Caffeine may relieve headaches. We suggest drinking at least 2 cups of tea or coffee.

When to Get Help

Go to your nearest emergency department right away if you have:

- Difficulty breathing.
- Weakness, numbness, tingling, or difficulty with movement that lasts longer than 15 minutes.
- Severe back pain not responding to medication.
- Unable to pass urine for 6-8 hours or you have pain from a full bladder.
- Signs of an infection: fever, redness, swelling or drainage (pus) from the spinal needle site.

When to Contact Your Cancer Care Team

Call the BC Cancer Provincial Nurse Line at 1-833-818-6626 if you have:

- Severe headache that is not relieved by the suggestions above.
- Nausea and vomiting for more than 1-2 days after your procedure or not relieved by medication.

Other information:
