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**THE CENTER FOR PAIN MEDICINE  
MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL**

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EPIDURAL BLOOD PATCH

*Information Sheet for Patients*

*What is an epidural blood patch?* A blood patch is a very effective way to stop a headache that has been caused by a spinal procedure. The headache usually follows a procedure such as a lumbar puncture (spinal tap or a myelogram) or placement of an epidural catheter. An injection of a freshly drawn sample of blood from a vein in your arm is placed back into the epidural space. This most often causes the headache to go away immediately.

*What is the goal of a blood patch?* The goal is to provide pain relief so that you are able to resume normal activities.

*What happens before a treatment?* You will be escorted to a procedure room where a nurse will conduct a pre-procedure interview. The pain specialist who will be performing the procedure will review your medical history, previous image studies, physical exam and current medications.

*What happens during the procedure?* The patient remains awake during the entire process. Blood pressure, heart rate and breathing are continually monitored. Lying face down on the procedure table the injection site is cleansed with an antiseptic. This procedure involves inserting a needle through the skin, muscle and soft tissues, so there is some slight discomfort involved. An injection of local anesthetic (numbing medication) will be administered in the area where you are experiencing pain. The physician then directs a needle through the skin with the use of x-ray guidance and deposits the medication. This procedure takes approximately 30 minutes.

