

Epidural Test Dose During Labor

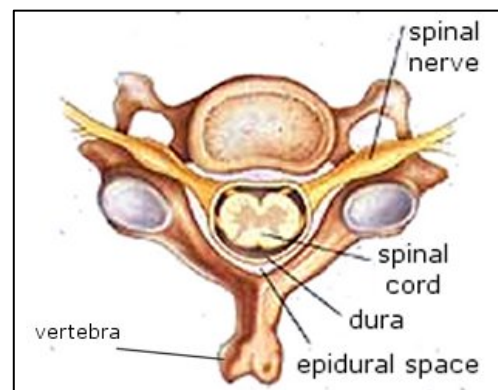
Anesthetic Pearls: Anesthetic Implications and Management of Epidural Test Dose During Labor

The usual test dose for epidural placement is 3 cc of 1.5% Lidocaine with 1:200,000 Epinephrine.

Main things to look for with an epidural test dose:

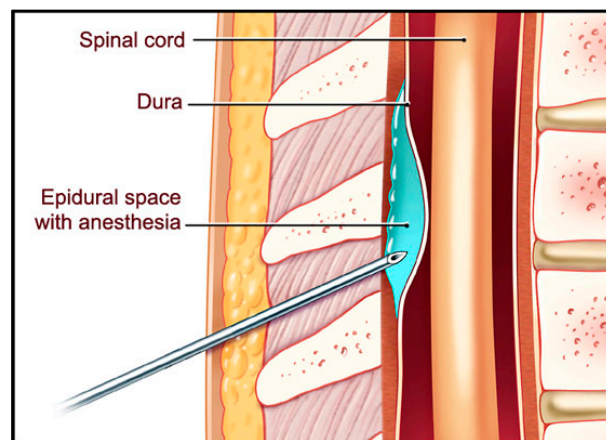
I. Subarachnoid Catheter Placement

- A. Need to allow at least 2-3 minutes for the development of subarachnoid block following test dose being given
- B. Symptoms of subarachnoid block:
 - 1) Rapid relief of pain associated with contractions
 - 2) Rapid sensation of warmth in buttocks, legs, and toes
 - 3) Motor weakness
 - 4) Hypotension



II. Intravascular Injection

- A. With an intravascular injection, the heart rate will increase by ~30% within 15-20 seconds following injection and return to normal within 60 seconds.
- B. Epinephrine does not produce a predictable increase in heart rate in laboring women.
- C. Patients with painful labor can have spontaneous heart rate changes making it difficult to detect a true tachycardia related to epinephrine in the test dose.
- D. Patients taking beta-blockers will not respond with an increase in heart rate—rather should monitor blood pressure looking for a 15 mm Hg increase in systolic blood pressure.



A negative response after an epidural test dose does **not** guarantee proper location of the epidural catheter. **Always** dose the epidural slowly and incrementally.