



## Spinal Epidural Abscess



### Overview

This mass is a collection of pus that forms in the spinal canal. It forms between the spinal cord (or nerve roots) and the vertebral bones. In the cervical and thoracic regions of the spine, it can press against the spinal cord. In the lumbar region, it can press against the nerve roots. A spinal epidural abscess can cause problems throughout the body.

### Causes

This type of abscess results from infection. Most commonly, a bacteria called *Staphylococcus aureus* is the culprit. The infection can also be caused by a fungus. In many cases, the infection begins elsewhere in the body. The infection may originate in the sinuses, bones or bloodstream before spreading into the epidural space. Invasive surgical procedures of the spine can increase a person's risk for a spinal epidural abscess.

### Symptoms

Symptoms vary depending on the location and size of the abscess. An abscess can cause pain and unusual sensations in the back or in other parts of the body. An abscess that presses against the spinal cord can interfere with the function of the nervous system. It can cause weakness and numbness of the arms or legs. In severe cases, this can result in paralysis. An abscess can also interfere with the ability to control the bladder and bowels.

### Treatment

A spinal epidural abscess is usually treated with a prolonged course of antibiotics and with surgery to drain or remove the abscess. Antibiotics are given through an IV for a period of several weeks.