



Consent Information - Patient Copy

Anaesthetic : Nerve Blocks

This information sheet is to be read with the 'About your Anaesthetic' patient information sheet.

A nerve block, also called a 'peripheral nerve block', is where a specific nerve or bundle of nerves to a specific area of the body can be made numb. This can be used as the sole form of anaesthetic or combined with sedation or a general anaesthetic. This form of anaesthesia is used to provide long-lasting pain relief, during and after surgery. It can last from 2 to 24 hours, depending on the site and the drugs used.

Sometimes a very fine tube is put through the needle and left in place. This means that the local anaesthetic can be given for a longer period of time – at times up to a few days.

The fine tube can also be connected to a pump called a Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA) machine. This is where you can be in charge of your own pain relief.

A. Types of nerve blocks

There are many types of nerve blocks each aimed at different nerves.

Your anaesthetist will explain the particular block that is selected for your surgery by using the diagram at the end of this sheet.

B. Benefits of a nerve block

Nerve blocks have many benefits and these include:

- Better pain relief after your surgery.
- You may need less strong pain relieving drugs such as morphine.
- Less morphine related side effects such as nausea and itch.
- Shorter recovery time after your surgery.
- Extremely safe procedure.

C. What are the risks of nerve blocks?

Every anaesthetic has a risk of side effects and complications. Whilst these are usually temporary, some of them may cause long-term problems.

Common side effects and complications of a nerve block

- Nerve damage - Nerve damage, if it happens, is usually temporary, and will get better over a period of weeks to months. Damage may cause weakness and/ or numbness of the body part that the nerve

goes to. Permanent nerve damage rarely happens.

- Bruising (haematoma) - If you take Aspirin, Warfarin, Persantin, Clopidogrel (Plavix and Iscover) and Asasantin you are more likely to get a haematoma as it may affect your blood clotting. Your anaesthetist will discuss this with you.
- Failure of block - This may require a further injection of anaesthetic or a different method of anaesthesia to be used.

Less common side effects and complications of a nerve block

- Infection
- Lung collapse (only with some blocks)
- Damage to surrounding structures such as blood vessels, nerves and muscles.

Rare Risks and complications of a nerve block

- Overdose of local anaesthetic
- Seizures
- Cardiac Arrest
- Death.

D. Your recovery from a nerve block

The area that has been blocked may remain numb or weak for up to 24 hours (longer if you have tubing inserted). During this time you will not be able to tell if something is painful. It is important that you do not place hot or very cold things on the affected part as these could cause burns.

If you have a 'weak' leg do not walk without a person to assist you.

If the numbness/weakness has not gone away after 24 hours you should contact the hospital.

Notes to talk to my doctor about

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