

Regional Anesthesia (Nerve Blocks)
Patient Information Sheet

- There may be multiple anesthetic techniques available for your surgery, including regional anesthesia. The anesthetic technique recommended will depend on several factors, including the type of surgery and your medical conditions.
- Regional anesthesia produces numbness with the injection of local anesthetic medication around nerves in a region of the body corresponding to the surgical procedure. Epidural or spinal blocks anesthetize the abdomen and both lower extremities. Other nerve blocks may be performed on the nerves in the arms or legs to anesthetize individual extremities.
Along with regional anesthesia, other medications can also be given that will make you comfortable and drowsy, and will blur your memory of the surgery.
- Nerve blocks may be used as the main anesthesia for your surgery, or may be used in combination with general anesthesia. Nerve blocks may last for many hours after surgery, thus helping to reduce your postoperative pain and discomfort.
- Common surgeries for which a nerve block may be used include:
 - Shoulder, arm and hand surgery (Interscalene, Infraclavicular, Axillary, Bier Blocks)
 - Leg, knee, ankle, and foot surgery (Femoral, Sciatic, Popliteal, Ankle Blocks)
 - Total knee replacement (Femoral Block)
 - ACL surgery (Femoral Block)

Potential Risks:

- Soreness and minor bleeding at the injection site can occur commonly
- Very rare risks include:
 - Infection at the site of injection
 - Nerve damage, including prolonged or permanent numbness or pain
 - Certain nerve blocks for arm surgery may cause a collapsed lung
 - If the local anesthetic medication accidentally enters a blood vessel, you could experience dizziness, seizure, or very rarely death

Precautions:

- Your blocked extremity will be **numb** and temporarily **weak**. Do not attempt to put weight on a numb or weak leg, as you may fall.
- Since you may not be able to feel your numb arm or leg, take care not to harm it accidentally. For example, do not leave it leaning against anything, such as a bedrail or car door. The prolonged pressure against the arm or leg could lead to injury.
- Your nerve block will wear off after several hours. It is often a good idea to start taking your oral pain medicine before going to bed the night after surgery, whether or not you are hurting. The nerve block may wear off in the middle of the night, leaving you uncomfortable. Talk with your anesthesiologist or surgeon for recommendations.
- The interscalene block, most commonly used for shoulder surgery, has unique side effects due to other nerves located in the same region as the nerves to be numbed for the block. These potential side effects will go away as the block wears off. These side effects include:
 - Temporary pressure sensation in the chest
 - Redness of the eye
 - Eyelid droop
 - Hoarseness

If you have additional questions prior to your hospital admission, a pre-admission anesthesiology consultation may be arranged through your surgeon's office.

For post-operative questions related to your nerve block, you may contact the anesthesiologist on-call at 214-681-6748.