

Understanding A Peripheral Nerve Block Catheter

Peripheral Nerve Block Catheter

A peripheral nerve block catheter delivers numbing medicine near some of the nerves that give feeling to your surgery site.

The block reduces your feelings of pain but may not take away all of the pain. Even with a nerve block, most patients still need to take a prescription pain medicine.

Peripheral nerve blocks affect the nerves that control pain, feeling and movement. The nerve block may cause numbness, tingling, heaviness, warmth, weakness, or an inability to move your affected arm or leg. Effects of the nerve block will stop when the medicine wears off.

Peripheral nerve blocks can be used for many surgery sites including:

- upper body: shoulder, collar bone, elbow, forearm, wrist and hand
- lower body: hip, knee, ankle and foot.

Types of Nerve Blocks

Your anesthesiologist will decide which nerve block is right for you. There are two types of nerve blocks:

- a single shot that lasts 12 to 24 hours after surgery. You will need to take pain medicine by mouth to manage your pain.

- a continuous (nonstop) block through a catheter that provides ongoing pain relief for 72 hours after surgery.
 - The catheter (tube) is connected to a small portable pump. The pump will provide the numbing medicine nonstop.
 - If you go home with the nerve block catheter, your nurse will give you instructions. You may want to have a family member or friend hear the instructions to help support your care and recovery at home.
 - **Note:** You may feel an increase of pain when the catheter is removed and the effects of the block wear off.

Benefits of a Nerve Block

A nerve block can:

- reduce your pain during and after surgery
- decrease your need for prescription pain medicine
- reduce the side effects from prescription pain medicine
- allow you to rest better after surgery
- help you increase your activity level after surgery, such as physical therapy
- shorten your hospital stay.

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How the Nerve Block Catheter is Inserted

Before the nerve block is inserted, you will receive another medicine through an intravenous (IV) line to help you relax before surgery. The IV will be inserted into your hand or arm. (The nerve block can also be done during surgery.)

- The anesthesiologist (specially trained doctor) will locate the nerve to be blocked.
- After finding the right location, numbing medicine will be put into your skin before the needle is inserted.
- The numbing medicine is injected. You will feel pressure. This is normal.
- After your skin is numb, the anesthesiologist will insert the needle near the nerves that need to be blocked.
- The anesthesiologist inserts a small, flexible catheter and removes the needle.
- A clear dressing will cover the site.
- You may feel warmth, heaviness or tingling from the nerve block.
- The procedure takes 15 to 20 minutes.
- The nerve block will begin working 20 to 30 minutes after the procedure.

When To Call Your Anesthesiologist

Tell or call the anesthesiologist if you have any of the following symptoms from the nerve block:

- drowsiness
- lightheadedness, dizziness and/or feeling disoriented
- signs of infection: tenderness, redness, swelling, drainage at the catheter site
- pain not controlled by the pump or prescription pain medicine
- anxiety
- numbness around your mouth
- metallic taste in your mouth
- blurred vision
- ringing in your ears
- any questions or concerns.