

Your child has been recommended to have a peripheral nerve block for pain control after their surgery. Before your child has their surgery the anesthesiologist will discuss the nerve block with you (and your child if appropriate) and answer any questions you may have.

What is a peripheral nerve block?

Nerve blocks are a way to help reduce pain and discomfort after surgery. Nerve blocks are performed by delivering local anesthetic (numbing medication) around the nerves that carry painful sensation from the surgical site or limb (arm or leg).

When pain is expected for several days a nerve catheter (plastic tube) is placed typically for two to three days so numbing medicine can be continuously given to provide pain relief.

How is the nerve block performed?

The anesthesiologist in the operating room will place the catheter while your child is asleep under the general anesthetic. The catheter is placed next to the nerve and connected to a pump which will deliver the numbing medicine.

What are the benefits of a continuous peripheral nerve block?

- Provides very good lasting pain relief.
- Decreases need for stronger pain medicine such as morphine that may have side effects like nausea, constipation and sleepiness.
- Enable your child to recover comfortably at home, shortening stay in hospital.
- Decreased pain lessens stress on your body helping the body to heal.

What are the common effects of a continuous peripheral nerve block?

Effects depend on the nerves involved. The affected arm or leg may:

- Feel heavy, floppy and weak (may be hard to lift or move)
- Feel numb or have pins and needles.
- Have less sensation to hot/cold at the affected area.
- Still have some pain as sometimes the surgical area is not completely numbed by the nerve that is blocked.
- Have bruising around the site

Specific effects are related to some nerve block sites which the anesthesiologist will discuss.

What are the risks of a continuous nerve block?

Risks and complications will be reviewed by your anesthesiologist. Complications with nerve blocks are **very rare**. However possible complications include:

- Prolonged “pins and needles” sensation after the block wears off.
- Bleeding or infection at the site of the nerve block
- Nerve damage causing weakness or pain. Any type of long lasting or permanent damage is extremely rare.

What is an elastomeric pump?

A balloon-type pump that continuously delivers medicine. It is completely portable and you will receive a pouch to carry the pump.

Your child’s anesthesiologist or Acute Pain Service will set up the pump. The pump connects to the catheter near the site of your child’s surgery.

How the pump works:

- The balloon pump will be full of medicine.
- As the medicine goes in, the balloon pump will become smaller. You may not notice the balloon shrinking for a day or more.
- The pump is empty when the balloon is empty. You will feel a hard tube in the middle of the pump.

How do I care for my child at home?

Prior to discharge, nurses will review the catheter, pump and ongoing care instructions and will provide you with a “caring for your child at home” handout. The pain management team (Acute Pain Service) will follow up with you daily by phone

Can my child take pain medicine even if they are still numb?

YES. The local anesthetic from the nerve block will not interact with other pain medicine. Your child **SHOULD** continue to take pain medicine as prescribed, or as per discharge instructions. These medications can also help reduce swelling and inflammation.