

Using a continuous nerve block infusion pump at home

Your child has a **nerve block** for pain control after surgery. Your child has an infusion pump that gives them a continuous dose of local anesthetic. **Local anesthetic** is a numbing medication that targets specific nerves. The nerve block should reduce the amount of pain that your child feels after surgery.

What to expect

- Your child's surgical site, or limb (arm or leg) on the side of surgery, will feel numb while the pump is working. The numbness can last for up to 24 hours after the infusion pump stops. Your child's limb may feel heavy, tingly or weak. The skin on their abdomen (stomach) or chest may be numb.
- A nerve block may not take all the pain away. Your child should take their pain medication as per your discharge instructions.

Caring for your child with a nerve block

- **DO NOT** let your child drive or use dangerous machinery while their limb is numb. Local anesthetic can numb the nerves that move your child's arm or leg muscles. Your child may not be able to control their arm or leg while the local anesthetic is working.
- **DO NOT** apply pressure, heat, or cold to the numb areas, except as directed by your doctor. Local anesthetic reduces sensation. Your child may not realize their limb is being injured by pressure, heat or cold.
- If your child had a nerve block for surgery on their leg or foot, they **MUST NOT** put weight or walk on the affected leg until the block wears off, or until enough strength has returned. Encourage your child to ask for help before they stand or walk.
- If your child's surgeon prescribed a sling or brace, your child **MUST** keep it on while they are still numb. Your child can remove the sling or brace to do physical therapy. Afterward, they should wear it as prescribed.

About the infusion pump

A balloon-type **infusion pump** delivers medication at a continuous rate. It is completely portable. You may receive a pouch to carry the pump and medication.

Your child's anesthesiologist will set up their pump. It is filled with local anesthetic. The pump connects to a **catheter** (tube) near the site of your child's surgery.

How the pump works:

- At first, the balloon pump will be full of medication.
- As the medication infuses (goes into your child). The outside bag on the pump will get looser. 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 to take care of the pump:

- **Do NOT** adjust or squeeze the pump. The pump has enough force to deliver your child's medication.
- **Do NOT** drop the pump.
- **Do NOT** put the pump in water.
- **Do NOT** get the pump cold (for example, putting ice packs too close to pump).
- **Do NOT** get the pump hot. Keep it outside the blankets when your child sleeps.
- **Keep the pump at the correct height.** The pump should be:
 - At a height between your child's shoulders and hips when they are upright, and
 - At the same height as your child's body when they lie down.

Removing the Catheter

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 30 seconds.
- Gently remove the dressing covering the catheter and **insertion site** (where the catheter enters your child's skin). You can also remove any tape.
- Hold the catheter as close as you can to where it enters the skin. Gently pull it out using a constant pressure. Your child should not feel discomfort.
 - There should not be resistance when you remove the catheter. Stop if it is difficult to remove.
 - If you feel you need to pull harder on the catheter, please stop. Please call the Acute Pain Service Nurse Practitioner or Doctor. A healthcare worker will help you remove the catheter.
- Apply a gauze pad over the insertion site and hold pressure for 5 minutes. Then, cover the area with a Band-Aid. You can remove the band-aid later that day.
- Put the pump and tubing into the garbage. Do not recycle them.
- In the next 24-48 hours, **CHECK** the injection site (where the needle went in) for signs of infection. A small bruise is normal.
- **If you notice redness, swelling, excessive tenderness, or pus, call the Acute Pain Nurse Practitioner or the On-Call Acute Pain Service Doctor.**



Clamp the tubing **IMMEDIATELY** and get help if your child has:

- Bleeding from the insertion site,
- Signs of infection (redness, excessive tenderness, or pus) at the insertion site,
- A leaking pump,
- A change in their pain level,
- A change in their numbness,
- Ringing or rumbling in their ear(s),
- A metallic or funny taste, or numbness in their mouth or lips,
- Lightheadedness, dizziness, or excessive drowsiness,
- Hives, rash, or itching,
- Irregular breathing and heartbeat,
- Difficulty breathing,
- Chest pain, or
- Numbness or tingling lasting more than 24 hours after their catheter was removed.

Call 604-875-2345 IMMEDIATELY. Ask for the On-Call Acute Pain Service Nurse Practitioner or Doctor.

If your child's symptoms are severe, CALL 911

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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

Yes. The local anesthetic from the nerve block will not interact with your child's pain medication. Your child should continue to take their pain medication as prescribed, or as per your discharge instructions.

My child is still having some numbness even after 24 hours. Is this normal?

Some children still have numbness 24 hours after a nerve block. However, this can be a sign of something more serious.

If your child still has numbness 24 hours after their nerve block:

- Call 604-875-2345 and ask for the On-Call Acute Pain Service Doctor, and
- Contact your child's surgeon, as this could also be a problem related to your child's surgery or injury.

Questions? You can contact the Acute Pain Nurse Practitioner (Monday – Friday from 8 am to 4 pm) at **604-788-9979** or call BC Children's Hospital at **604-875-2345**, and ask the operator to page the On-Call Acute Pain Service Doctor.