

Continuous Nerve Block Catheter: Post-operative pain management

What is a continuous nerve block catheter?

- A nerve block catheter infuses local anesthetic (“freezing”) medicine that blocks the nerve supplying the area of your body where you have surgery and reduces the amount of pain.
- This small catheter (a thin tube) stays under your skin and can provide local anesthetic to reduce pain for up to 48 hours.
- The benefit of a nerve block catheter is that it helps to control pain and reduces the number of pain pills you may need. Pain pills can cause side effects such as nausea, itchiness, drowsiness, constipation, confusion, and dizziness.

What should you expect?

- Your affected limb may feel numb/heavy while the catheter is in place.
- You will have decreased feeling over the affected limb, and there is a risk of unintentional injury if you are not careful. Please protect your limb carefully.
- Do not put cold or hot packs on the affected area.
- Once the nerve block starts wearing off, you will notice a tingling feeling in the limb, followed by the gradual return of normal sensation.

How much pain should I expect after surgery?

- It is normal to have some pain after surgery.
- The amount of pain depends on the type of surgery. Patients with surgery involving the bones and joints may have moderate to high levels of pain right after surgery for a few days. Often, patients are given oral pain medicine (pills) to take to control their pain after leaving the hospital.
- With the continuous nerve block catheter, you will not need to take as many pain pills. However, you will still need some oral pain pills as directed to help with your overall pain control.
- **You may still have some pain.** For certain types of surgery, not all of your pain will be taken away by the catheter alone because there are many nerves affected by the surgery. Your anesthesiologist will provide you with specific information about the catheter for your surgery.

Caring for your catheter:

- **Keep the dressing on.** While the catheter is in place, keep area clean and dry. This will prevent the catheter from getting loose.
- **Bathing:** Do not take a bath while the catheter is in place because you might soak the dressing. You may wash yourself with a damp cloth.
- **Small amount of fluid or blood on dressing:** It is normal to have small amounts of blood or fluid under the dressing. If you feel there is too much fluid, contact us by phone.
- **Automatic delivery.** Once the catheter is in place, the medicine is delivered automatically. You do not need to adjust or manage the medicine in any way.

Potential risks of a continuous nerve block catheter:

Your safety is our priority. Despite all efforts to prevent risks, there are still risks possible with any procedure including failure, infection, bleeding, adverse drug reaction, and rarely nerve injury. Your anesthesiologist will discuss with you about side effects and any other risks associated with your catheter

Removing your catheter:

1. Wash your hands. Peel the clear dressing and medical tape off the catheter insertion site. The only discomfort you should feel is the dressing coming off.
2. Gently pull the nerve block catheter (thin tube) out. It should not be difficult or painful to remove.
3. A small amount of blood or fluid drainage from the insertion site is normal. You should hold pressure over the site where the catheter was for 5 – 10 minutes then apply a band-aid over the area. This band-aid can be removed later on the same day.
4. Throw the dressing, pump, tubing, and catheter into the garbage.
5. The numbness in the affected limb should resolve with 12 – 24 hours of catheter removal. Please contact us if your limb is still numb after 24 hours.
6. Continue to take the oral pain medications as prescribed by your surgeon
7. Remove the CPNB Catheter on: _____
8. If you are discharged home with a prescription for Enoxaparin (Blood thinner), give yourself the injection at _____ on the day of your CPNB Catheter removal.



Caution:

- Do not wet nerve block catheter dressing
- Do not disconnect infusor tubing from the catheter or cut the catheter



Contact us with any questions if you have questions or have any of the following:

- Redness, tenderness, swelling, or drainage at the nerve block catheter site
- Ringing in your ears, metallic taste in your mouth, tingling around our face or mouth, dizziness, or shortness of breath
- If your pain is not well controlled
- If the catheter becomes dislodged or is disconnected from the bottle

Contact information:

ask for Acute Pain Service