

# Health Facts *for you*

## Going Home after an Upper Extremity Block Anesthesia

Checked below is the type of nerve block you received. Please read this handout to help with your care at home. The length of time the block will last varies widely between patients.

- Axillary (8 – 24 hours)
- Interscalene (12 – 24 hours)
- Supraclavicular (12 – 24 hours)
- Infraclavicular (12 – 24 hours)
- Bier or “IV local” (Operative and short term post-op pain control)

Protect your arm or hand from extreme heat or cold. Do not put any pressure on the arm or hand. Always be able to see your arm or hand. Keep your arm or hand raised on pillows. Sleep on your back with your head raised so you do not put pressure on your numb arm or hand. Do not smoke while numbness is present. While awake, you may use a sling while your arm or hand is clumsy until you have regained control and sensation.

- Paravertebral (12 – 24 hours)

This block can be used to numb exact areas of the body. For instance, at the level of the neck, it can be used for thyroid gland or carotid artery surgery. At the chest and abdomen level, it can be used for many types of breast, chest and abdominal surgeries. At the level of the hip, it can be used for surgeries of the hip, knee, and front of the thigh. The anesthesiologist will meet with you before your surgery to discuss your block.

- Epidural/Spinal (for surgery and short term post-op pain control)

This type of block is given through a small needle placed into the lower back. There may be some back soreness partly due to the needle placement and partly due to the stretching of ligaments from relaxed muscles. This should fade over the next few days. If you have a moderate or severe headache right away or even in 3-5 days after placement, you need to contact your surgeon, anesthesiologist or your primary care doctor to be checked for treatment for the headache.

## **Pain Medicine**

If you have pain, you can start taking the oral pain medicine that your doctor has prescribed for you. Do not take extra Tylenol<sup>®</sup> (acetaminophen) if you have been prescribed any of the medicines listed below.

- Vicodin<sup>®</sup> (hydrocodone & acetaminophen)
- Norco<sup>®</sup> (hydrocodone & acetaminophen)
- Percocet<sup>®</sup> (oxycodone & acetaminophen)
- Tylenol<sup>®</sup> #3 (codeine & acetaminophen)

If you have not had any pain before going to bed, there is a good chance that the numbness will wear off in the middle of the night. For this reason, you may take your pain medicine before going to bed. We suggest that you set your alarm for 4 – 6 hours to see if you need to take more pain medicine. The oral pain medicine will take 20 to 30 minutes to start working, so don't wait until you are in a lot of pain because it will be harder to get the pain under control.

You should have someone, age 16 or older, stay with you for the rest of today and tonight. This is for your own safety.

You may feel a little sleepy for the next 12 to 24 hours. This is partly due to the medicines you receive during and after surgery. Rest and relax for the next 12 hours. Avoid hazardous or strenuous activity.

## **For the Next 24 Hours, Even if You Feel Normal**

- Don't drive a car, motorcycle, or bike. Don't run machinery or power tools.
- Don't drink alcohol or use drugs that have not been approved.
- Don't make any important personal or business decisions, or sign important papers.
- Follow your doctor's advice about activity.
- Be careful when you sit or stand up after being in bed for a long time. You may become dizzy if you sit or stand too quickly.

## **Diet**

For the rest of today, start slowly by drinking clear liquids such as water, apple juice, and soft drinks. If you feel okay, then try soup, soda crackers, and other foods that are easy to digest. Avoid spicy or fatty foods. Be sure to drink glasses of clear liquids often to avoid dehydration. Tomorrow, you can eat as you wish.

## When to Call Your Doctor

### In an Emergency, call 911.

Call if you have

- A fever above 100°F (by mouth) or 99°F (under the arm) for 2 readings taken 4 hours apart.
- Trouble breathing or a “wet sounding” cough that doesn’t go away.
- Frequent vomiting after getting settled at home (more than twice).
- Trouble passing urine by late tonight or you have a painful, full bladder.
- Prolonged numbness lasting longer than you were told to expect.

Your surgeon is Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ from the \_\_\_\_\_ Clinic.

The clinic phone number is \_\_\_\_\_.

Your anesthesiologist is Dr. \_\_\_\_\_.

If you live outside the area, call **1-800-323-8942**.

After hours, weekends, and holidays, call **(608) 262-0486**. This is the paging operator. Ask for the doctor on call for Dr. \_\_\_\_\_. Leave your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back.

The staff at the Outpatient Surgery Center will call you at home or work on the next working day after your procedure. We will ask a few questions about your recovery and the care you received. Let us know if this is not possible or may be a problem.

We wish you a quick recovery.