

What is a peripheral nerve block?

A peripheral nerve block can help decrease pain during and after surgery. It numbs the nerves that send pain messages to the brain.

- A nerve block is an injection (shot) near a bundle of nerves in the part of the body that has pain.
- A local anesthetic (medicine used to numb the area like the medicine used at the dentist) is injected into the area.

How can a nerve block help my child after surgery?

Talk with your child's doctor about how a nerve block can help your child's pain. A nerve block can:

- Help by blocking pain messages from the part of the body where your child has surgery.
- Decrease the need for narcotic pain medicines and their side effects.

Depending on the area of your child's nerve block, their arm or leg may be numb and hard to move for 8 to 10 hours.

- Your child may get up to 24 hours of pain relief.
- The muscles in the area will be weak. This happens because the medicine also numbs the nerves that make the muscles move.

What types of medicine are used with a nerve block?

Local anesthetics are most often used.

- Be sure to tell your child's doctor if your child has any allergies to medicines.
- Also give the doctor a complete list of any medicines that your child takes, including:
 - Over-the-counter medicines
 - Vitamins
 - Herbs
 - Supplements

What are the types of nerve blocks?

The following table lists information about types of nerve blocks and their side effects. Side effects are normal and wear off as the nerve block wears off.

Name of block	What it is used for	Usual side effects
Superficial cervical plexus	ENT surgery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Droopy eyelid• Pinpoint pupils• Possible arm numbness and weakness

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Nerve blocks for surgery, continued

Name of block	What it is used for	Usual side effects
Interscalene	Shoulder, elbow, wrist or hand surgery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Droopy eyelid on side of surgery • Hoarseness • Trouble swallowing or taking a deep breath • Sensation of needing to cough or clear the throat • Shoulder or arm on side of surgery will be weak or numb
Supraclavicular	Elbow, wrist or hand surgery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arm on side of surgery will be weak and numb • Pinpoint pupils • Droopy eyelid on side of surgery
Femoral, fascia iliaca	Hip, thigh or knee surgery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leg on side of surgery will be weak and numb
Sciatic, adductor canal	Knee surgery, surgery on the lower leg, foot or ankle surgery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leg on side of surgery will be weak or numb
Rectus sheath, TAP (transverse abdominis plane), QL (quadratus lumborum)	Abdominal, urology or gynecological surgery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbness in area of abdomen (belly) • QL block may cause leg weakness
Paravertebral, ESP (erector spinae plane)	Thoracic, abdominal, urology or gynecological surgery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbness in chest or belly • Low blood pressure • Droopy eyelids • Pinpoint pupils
PECS block serratus	Thoracic or abdominal surgery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbness in chest • Arm weakness

If your child had a femoral, sciatic or ankle nerve block:

- They **must use crutches** to stand and walk. They **MAY NOT** try to stand or put weight on their leg because they could fall.
- Help your child if they need to go up or down steps.
- Avoid multiple steps or stairs.

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Nerve blocks for surgery, continued

How do I care for my child after a nerve block?

While your child's arm or leg is still numb, be sure to check these things often:

- Check to make sure that any dressings or splints are not too tight.
- Check fingers and toes to make sure they do not look blue or dusky.
- Check to make sure the arm or leg is not resting against anything that may cause pressure on your child's arm or leg.

Other things to help protect your child's arm, leg, hand or foot include:

- If your child had surgery on their arm or hand, support it with a sling.
- Keep your child's arm or leg still and in the proper position as advised by the doctor.
- Keep your child's arm or leg away from objects that are hot or cold. They may not be able to feel them, and they could cause frostbite or burns.

As the nerve block starts to wear off, your child may feel a prickly or funny feeling in the skin. This is normal.

- When this happens, give your child the pain medicine that the doctor ordered for them.
- Do not wait for the nerve block to completely wear off before you give the pain medicine. The pain could be worse by then, and it will be harder for the pain medicine to work well.
- Give your child something to eat before they take the pain medicine. This helps prevent stomach upset.

If your child had an anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) repair:

- They may have a strong sense of "tightness" in the back of the leg.
- If your child is uncomfortable, give them a dose of pain medicine even though the nerve block is still working.

If your child is ready to go to sleep and the site is still numb:

- Have your child eat, and give them a dose of pain medicine.
- If the nerve block starts to wear off while they are sleeping, the pain medicine will already be working.

If your child wakes up the next day and the site is still numb:

- Try not to worry – most often, there is nothing wrong. The numbness will wear off over time. Talk with the pain team so they can follow-up with you later.
- Have your child eat, and give them a dose of pain medicine when it starts to feel like pins and needles.

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Nerve blocks for surgery, continued

When should I call the doctor?

Call the doctor **right away** if your child has any of these:

- Surgery site looks blue
- Arm, hand, leg or foot where they had surgery looks blue
- Unexpected weakness or abnormal feeling in the arm or leg for more than 24 hours
- Swelling in the area where the doctor gave the injection and medicine for the nerve block

Also call the doctor if you have any questions or concerns about how your child looks or feels.

What if I have questions?

Please call 404-785-KIDS (5437).

- Ask to talk with the pain team.
- Tell them where your child had the nerve block (such as the Egleston or Scottish Rite hospital).
- Ask to talk with the doctor who is on call for the pain team at that hospital.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

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