

Phenol or alcohol nerve block

What is a phenol or alcohol nerve block?

A phenol or alcohol nerve block is an injection (shot) into a bundle of nerves.

- It is a way to treat muscle tightness, spasticity and pain.
- Sometimes, a medicine called phenol is used. At other times, alcohol may be used.
- The medicine impairs the nerves in the muscle fibers that are causing your child's problem.

What do I do before the nerve block?

A doctor will give your child general anesthesia (medicine to make them sleep) before getting the block.

- Carefully follow the directions you are given to prepare your child for anesthesia.
- Your child's stomach must be empty, so they do not vomit (throw up) and choke while they are asleep.
- Tell your child's doctor about any medicines your child is taking, including over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, herbs and supplements.
- Also tell your child's doctor if your child has any allergies to medicines.

What will the nerve block be like?

Your child will have the nerve block in the operating room.

- After your child is asleep, the doctor will inject the medicine into the nerves causing the motor problem.
- A nerve micro-stimulator is used to make sure the medicine is injected into the right place.
 - This machine gives a tiny shock to a nerve that controls a specific muscle, which causes the muscle to contract.
 - This allows the doctor to make sure that the correct nerve and correct muscle are injected.
- The reason your child is given anesthesia is because the nerve block needles and alcohol cause pain when injected.

Are there any risks?

Your child's doctor will talk with you about the risks and side effects involved with the nerve block.

Some common risks and side effects include:

- Pain and swelling at the injection site
- Decreased feeling beyond the injection site
- Swelling beyond the injection site
- Nerve pain in the nerves that were injected
- Loss of movement to areas beyond the injection site

Less frequent but serious side effects include irregular heartbeat, seizures and passing out.

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

Phenol or alcohol nerve block, continued

What happens after the nerve block?

Once your child is awake, able to drink fluids, and able to move again, the nurse will let you know when they are ready to go home.

- Your child should have a decrease in muscle tightness and spasticity after the nerve block.
- The effects of the block most often last for 6 to 30 months.

When should I call the doctor?

Call 911 right away if your child has any serious concerns, such as breathing or heart problems, seizures or passing out.

Call your child's doctor if:

- Your child has any of the common risks or side effects listed on page 1.
- You have any questions or concerns about how your child looks or feels.

Is any follow-up care needed?

- Make a follow-up visit for your child for 4 to 8 weeks after the injection.
- Follow any other directions or treatments as advised by your child's doctor.

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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