

Regional Anesthesia and Analgesia for Pain Control after Surgery

This Fact Sheet is for information only, and is for surgery patients who may be receiving regional anesthesia/analgesia. Regional anesthesia and/or analgesia may be used alone or in combination with sedation or general anesthesia.



Your anesthesiologist will discuss possible options with you.

What is Regional Anesthesia/Analgesia?

- Regional anesthesia makes a specific part of the body completely numb to relieve pain or allow surgical procedures to be done.
- Regional analgesia is one way of giving medication to reduce pain after your surgery. Pain medications are an important part of your recovery, and can help you heal faster with fewer complications.
- If you are having regional analgesia to control pain, an Anesthesiologist will insert a needle near specific nerves.
- Pain medication flows through the needle and blocks nerve function, making the body part numb.
- It takes about 20 minutes to perform the procedure.
- Not all patients can have regional anesthesia. Some medical conditions make the procedure risky or impossible.

Before You Get Regional Anesthesia:

- The Anesthesiologist will ask you detailed questions about your health, and perform a physical examination. If you and your Anesthesiologist determine that regional anesthesia is the right choice for you, you will be asked to give consent prior to the procedure.

- You will be given an intravenous (IV) to give you fluid during your surgery.
- You will have to lie/sit in a position that will allow insertion of the needle.

What are the Advantages of Regional Anesthesia/Analgesia?

- It is an excellent form of pain control.
- It avoids the risks of alternate approaches
- It reduces the stress response to surgery
- It reduces the need for oral or intravenous medications that may cause nausea or constipation.

What are the Risks of Regional Anesthesia?

- No pain relief medications delivered via regional anesthesia are completely risk free.
- Most patients, however, do not suffer serious side effects or complications.
- Your anesthesiologist will discuss risks of the specific block being offered to you. It is important to review the information on risks (on the back of this Fact Sheet) and ask an Anesthesiologist if you have any questions.

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Common Side Effects

- Pain and bruising where the needle was inserted
- Temporary weakness and numbness
- Inadequate pain control which may require:
 - extra intravenous medications
 - oral medication in addition to the regional anesthesia (most patients also take some oral pain medication)

Uncommon Side Effects

- Significant drop in blood pressure

Rare Complications

- Temporary nerve damage, weakness or a numb patch
- A higher than expected spread of medication which can affect breathing muscles

Very Rare Complications

Loss of consciousness, seizures

- Permanent nerve damage with possible paralysis

For more information, speak with your Anesthesiologist.

Notes: