

Spinal Anesthesia and Pain Control After Surgery

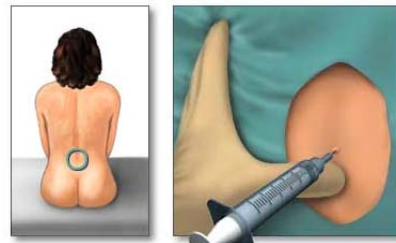
This Fact Sheet is for information only, and is for surgery patients who may be receiving spinal anesthetic. Please ask an Anesthesiologist if you have any questions.



What is Spinal Anesthesia?

- Pain medications are an important part of your recovery, and can help you heal faster with fewer complications.
- Spinal Anesthetic is one way of giving medication to reduce pain after your surgery.
- If you are having a spinal anesthetic to control pain, an Anesthesiologist will insert a needle into your back between the bones of your spine.
- Pain medication flows through the needle and blocks pain in the nerves of the spine.
- The needle is then removed.
- It takes about 20 minutes to perform the procedure.
- Not all patients can have spinal anesthesia. Some medical conditions make the procedure risky or impossible.

- You will have to sit in a position that will allow insertion of the spinal needle.



What are the Advantages of Spinal Anesthesia?

- It is an excellent form of pain control.
- It reduces the need for oral or intravenous medications that may cause nausea or constipation.

What are the Risks of Spinal Anesthesia?

- No pain relief medications delivered via spinal needle are completely risk free.
- Most patients, however, do not suffer serious side effects or complications.
- 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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Before you get spinal anesthetic:

- The Anesthesiologist will ask you detailed questions about your health, and perform a physical examination. If you and your Anesthesiologist determine that spinal anesthetic 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.

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Common Side Effects

- Pain and bruising where the spinal needle was inserted
- Temporary difficulty in passing urine. All patients with spinal anesthetic receive a urinary catheter to help them urinate.
- Temporary leg weakness
- Inadequate pain control which may require:
 - extra intravenous medications
 - oral medication for pain in addition to the spinal anesthetic (most patients take some oral medications)

Uncommon Side Effects

- Significant drop in blood pressure
- Severe headache

Rare Complications

- Temporary nerve damage (such as leg weakness or a numb patch on your leg/foot)
- A higher than expected spread of medication which can affect breathing muscles

Very Rare Complications

- Meningitis
- Loss of consciousness, seizures
- Blood clot with spinal cord damage
- Permanent nerve damage with possible paralysis

For more information, speak with your Anesthesiologist.

Notes: