**Regional Anesthesia**

**Peripheral Nerve Block Catheter Post-Op Instructions**

**General Facts**

* It is **NORMAL** to have decreased sensation and/or weakness in the limb where you had surgery. The amount of decreased feeling varies from person to person and especially within the first 24 hours.
* The strong medicine used when the nerve block was placed will begin to wear off 6 to 24 hours after your surgery. As the strong medicine wears off, you may start to feel some numbness/tingling and more pain where you had surgery.
* Your nerve block catheter is connected to a small portable pump, which delivers numbing medication to your arm or leg. The pump delivers a weaker numbing medicine than the numbing medicine used when the nerve block was first placed.
* The numbing medication may not relieve **ALL** the pain from your procedure. You may need to take additional pain pills. *Please carefully follow the instructions on your prescription*.
* When the portable pump is empty, the nerve block should wear off in 1-4 hours. As the nerve block wears off, you may start to feel some numbness/tingling and more pain where you had surgery.
* Start taking your pain pills before your peripheral nerve block completely wears off to avoid too much pain when the nerve block wears off.
* A healthcare provider will contact you to check on your progress if you go home with a nerve block catheter and a portable pump. For urgent conditions, including pain that is not well controlled, please call and ask for the “**On-Call Home-Pump Doctor**”. Most questions or problems can be handled over the phone. If you cannot reach the doctor on call by phone or are having an emergency, go to the nearest emergency room. If you are concerned about the surgical incision itself, please call your surgeon’s office.

 **Safety Precautions for peripheral nerve block catheters (Do’s and Don’ts)**

* **DO** ask for help getting out of bed and when performing daily activities. If your surgery was on your foot or leg, be sure not to bear weight on the affected side until your sensation has returned. Be careful walking, your leg can be numb or weak.
* **DO NOT** drive or operate heavy machinery while your catheter is in place. Your affected body part will be numb, weak and may be difficult to control.
* **DO** keep your sling and/or brace on while your pump is running; your physical therapist or surgeon will instruct you on when it is safe to remove.
* **DO NOT** apply excessive pressure, heat, or cold to the affected site unless directed by your surgeons. Remember, the local anesthetic medication makes the site numb and *reduces your ability to detect injury*. **Protect your limb like a baby!**
* **DO** keep the bandages completely dry
* **DO NOT** submerge yourself or the catheter in water (sponge baths are best to be sure your catheter and bandages stay dry)
* **DO** check the site where the catheter enters your skin daily **without removing the bandages**. Check for redness, swelling, severe tenderness or pus (signs of infection.)

**When you should STOP THE PUMP and**

**Call IMMEDIATELY**

**\*\*\*Ask for the On-Call Home-Pump Doctor\*\*\***

* Catheter site has signs of infection (as described on Page 1)
* Ringing/rumbling in your ear(s)
* Metallic/funny taste or numbness in your mouth or on your lips
* Dizziness, agitation, nervousness
* Hives
* Irregular breathing or heartbeat
* Shortness of breath or chest pain

**IF YOUR SYMPTOMS ARE SEVERE, CALL 911**

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

**Should I be as numb as I was at the hospital?**

**Not Necessarily.** During the placement of your catheter, you are given stronger medication than the one you are getting through your pump. The stronger medication could wear off in as little as 6 hours from the time of placement. Your surgical site may not be as numb as it was right after surgery.



**What can I do if my block is making me too numb?**

It is OK to stop the medication by closing the **clamp** (see figure 1) at any time. If you are still numb after more than 12 hours after shutting the medication off or removing the catheter, please call the on-call home pump doctor

**I closed the clamp, why am I still numb?**

Figure 1

It can take several hours for the effects of the medication to begin to wear off.

**I am starting to have pain again, how do I restart the medication and when should I restart it?**

To restart the pump, open the clamp (see figure 1). ***NOTE***: if the medication has been off for long, it may take **several hours** to begin working again. You may not regain the same amount of pain control as you did prior to stopping

**My pump is not covering all my pain; can I take pain pills too?**

**Yes.** There is no interaction between the local anesthetic from the pump and the pain pills you were prescribed.

**Fluid is leaking from the catheter, is something wrong?**

**No.** It is somewhat common for fluid to leak where the catheter inserts into your skin. Do your best to keep the site dry. You may use a towel or gauze to soak up any extra fluid.

**My catheter fell out, what do I do?**

Examine the catheter to make sure the end has a dark stripe. If you **do not see** this dark stripe, save the tubing that has come out and place a call to the number above for the On-Call Home Pump Doctor. If you see the dark stripe, you may remove the rest of your bandages and discard everything in the trash. You should start taking oral pain medication once the catheter is out to prevent getting behind on pain control.

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) - continued**

**When does the catheter come out?**

After **3 days** or if the medication in the pump is finished before 3 days, whichever comes first. You may remove your catheter at any time before then, especially if told to do so by your doctor or if you no longer want or need your surgical site to feel numb. Regardless of medication status or your pain levels, you must remove the catheter if it has been in for longer than 3 days.

**How do I remove the catheter from my body?**

Removing a catheter is easy. There are NO STITCHES.

1. Wash your hands with soap and water.
2. Gently remove all dressings, adhesive tape or sticky glue surrounding the catheter to expose the insertion site.

Figure 2

1. Grasp the tubing near your skin with two fingers (Figure 2) and gently pull the catheter out.

 ***NOTE:*** It should glide out VERY EASILY. If you feel pain, resistance or feel you need to use any force to pull the catheter out, STOP IMMEDIATELY. Leave the tubing as is and call the on-call doctor.

1. Carefully examine the tip of the catheter for a dark stripe (Figure 2) once it is out (typically about 2-3 inches of tubing will glide out before the tip comes out). If there is no dark stripe at the end, save the tubing that has come out in a plastic bag and call the on-call doctor as soon as possible. **DO NOT CUT THE TUBING.**
2. Once the tip is identified, dispose of all materials in the garbage (tubing, medication bag, dressings, etc.) **You do not need to return any of the materials.**

**QUESTIONS?**

 Call Day or Night

Ask for the On-Call Home Pump Physician