If you have any questions or concerns, please ask your doctor or nurse.

Anesthesia for Foot and Ankle Surgery

Your doctor has recommended regional anesthesia for your foot and ankle surgery. This information describes regional anesthesia and the care needed following its use. Carefully follow any added instructions given by your surgeon and nurse.

Anesthesia Plan

Anesthesia is used to relax you and to control pain during and after your surgery. Patients who have general anesthesia may have nausea, vomiting and drowsiness after their surgery. However, regional anesthesia administered into the affected area of the body can help avoid these effects, so that most patients:

- Feel less drowsy.
- Recover faster and start physical therapy sooner.
- Have excellent pain control both during and after the surgery.
- Are less likely to have nausea, vomiting or a sore throat.

Regional anesthesia for foot and ankle surgery uses:

- A nerve block just below the buttock (sciatic nerve block) that prevents pain during and after the surgery.
- An IV (into the vein) medication (sedation) to ensure that you are sleepy and very relaxed during surgery.

Keep in mind:

- Regional anesthesia cannot be used for all patients. On the day of surgery, your anesthesiologist will discuss the care option that is best for you.
- In some cases, general anesthesia may be needed. This is done only if the nerve block does not control the pain during surgery.
**Procedure**

The nerve block will be done before your surgery starts. To begin, you will be given an IV medicine to relax you (sedation). Once you are relaxed, you will be placed on your side or stomach. The skin just below your buttock will be cleaned and a needle inserted into the area. During this time, you should lie as still as you can. When the needle is close to the correct position, your foot will move on its own. It is important for the doctor to see this movement. Do not try to keep your foot from moving. Then, the nerve block medication will be injected.

This numbs the sciatic nerve located near the buttock. By numbing this nerve, you will have no feeling in your leg or foot for 16 to 36 hours. This numbing affects only the leg on which you are going to have surgery.

The block takes about 5 to 10 minutes to do. Once it is done, the staff will help you move onto your back. Your foot will be checked in 10 to 15 minutes to make sure that your foot is completely numb. Then, your surgery will begin.

**Going Home**

*Protect Your Leg and Foot*

The sciatic nerve block can last up to 48 hours. This can cause your leg and foot to be:

- Numb
- Difficult to move.

During this time, it is important to protect your leg and foot from injury.

- Do not try to stand or put any weight on your leg until the numbing effect wears off and until directed by your surgeon.
- You will need to use crutches when you walk or stand.
- If you must use the stairs at home, be careful. Climb up and down stairs in the sitting position. When climbing up the stairs, pull up backward with the good leg, step by step. When going down, slide down, step by step, with your good leg. Have the staff show you how to go up and down stairs.
- Protect your numbed leg and foot from hot and cold temperatures. Your sense of hot and cold is lessened until the numbing effect wears off.
Stay Comfortable

- Begin to take your pain medication as soon as you notice the block **starting** to wear off. Being able to move your toes is one of the first signs that the nerve block is wearing off. Take your first dose of pain medicine when you are able to move your toes. Then, take the pain medicine as needed on a regular basis (every _____ hours, as prescribed by your doctor).

- **Do not wait to feel severe pain.** It is much better to prevent the build-up of pain than to try to stop it once it is there.

- Contact your surgeon to report any severe pain not controlled by your medication.

Special Instructions

Have someone at home to assist you after surgery. **You will not be able to walk without crutches.**

Carefully follow the instructions given to you by your surgeon and nurse.

Please feel free to ask the anesthesiologist if you have questions about any part of your anesthesia care.

Health Information Resources

For more information, visit one of Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Health Learning Centers. These state-of-the-art health libraries are located on the third floor of the Galter Pavilion and on the first floor of the Prentice Women’s Hospital. Health information professionals are available to help you find the information you need and provide you with personalized support at no charge. You may contact the Health Learning Centers by calling 312-926-LINK (5465) or by sending an e-mail to hlc@nmh.org.

For additional information about Northwestern Memorial Hospital, please visit our Web site at www.nmh.org.

**Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar a el departamento de representantes para pacientes al 312-926-3112.**

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