

## Anesthesia for Toe and Foot Surgery

Your doctor has recommended a regional anesthesia for your toe or foot surgery. This information describes regional anesthesia and what you can expect afterward. 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 pain, nausea, vomiting and drowsiness after their surgery. However, regional anesthesia can help avoid these effects so that most patients:

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

- 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 toe and foot surgery uses:

- An ankle nerve block that numbs the foot and prevents pain during and after the surgery
- An IV (into the vein) medicine (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 given before surgery starts. To begin, you will be given an IV medicine to relax you (sedation). Once you are relaxed, the skin around your ankle will be cleaned. A needle will be inserted into the area. When the needle is close to the correct position, your toes will move on their own. (It is important for the doctor to see this movement, so don't try to keep your toes from moving.) Then, the nerve block medicine will be injected.

The block takes about 5 to 10 minutes to do. Once it is done, 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

By numbing the nerves of the foot, you will have no feeling in your toes or foot for 6 to 18 hours. This numbing affects only the toes or foot on which you are going to have surgery; the other foot is not affected.

### *Protect Your Toes and Foot*

The ankle nerve block can last up to 18 hours. This can cause your toes and foot to be numb and difficult to move.

During this time, it is important to protect your toes and foot from injury. Protect your affected toes 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 medicine as soon as you notice the nerve block **starting** to wear off. The ability to feel your toes is one of the first signs. Take your first dose when you are able to feel your toes. Then, take the 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 for any severe pain not controlled by your medicine.

## Special Instructions

Have someone at home to help you.

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

Please feel free to ask the anesthesiologist if you have any questions regarding 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](mailto:hlc@nmh.org).

For additional information about Northwestern Memorial Hospital, please visit our Web site at [www.nmh.org](http://www.nmh.org).

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