

- Nerve damage is very rare. It usually occurs as a numb patch which is likely to settle after a few days. Permanent nerve damage is also very rare. About 1 in 5000 or 1 in 10,000 blocks.

Care of the limb after the block

You will need to look after your leg/foot with great care to avoid injuring it until normal feeling returns. You may find it difficult to walk because of numbness or weakness in the ankle. Make sure you use crutches and **do not attempt to walk for the first time without nursing supervision.**

After a nerve block you may not feel pain or extremes of temperature. Avoid hot and sharp objects (eg: radiator, kettle, cooker) until the sensations have returned to normal. If you still have numbness or weakness after 48 hours and you have left the hospital, please contact your GP. They will be able to get in touch with the relevant surgical team.

Further information

For further information please visit the Royal College of Anaesthetists website: <https://www.rcoa.ac.uk/patientinfo>.

References

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet please email patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk

The Trust endeavours to ensure that the information given here is accurate and impartial.



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Peripheral nerve block of the lower limb

Anaesthetics Department

For urgent advice, information or feedback
please telephone switchboard 01205 364801
and dial extension 445293 (9.00am to 4.00pm)
or extension 445635 (24 hours)

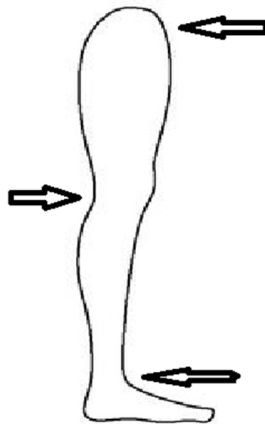
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What is a peripheral nerve block?

A peripheral nerve block involves an injection of local anaesthetic and other pain killers around a nerve. This makes the operating area numb and gives very good pain relief during and after surgery.

Depending on the site of the operation, the injection may be given on the upper thigh, behind the knee or around the ankle.

Possible injection sites



What does the procedure involve?

After cleaning the area around the thigh, knee or ankle with antiseptic solution, we will use local anaesthetic to numb the skin; this can sting for a few seconds. You may be given a mild sedative to make you feel relaxed. The anaesthetist will then use an ultrasound or nerve stimulator to guide them as to where to inject the local anaesthetic. It will take approximately 20 minutes for your foot/leg to go numb. Before we allow your operation to start, we will check that the area is anaesthetised properly.

If you feel any pain “pins or needles” in your leg during the procedure, tell your anaesthetist immediately. This indicates that one of your nerves is being irritated and the needle may need to be repositioned.

You have a choice as to whether you wish to remain awake, sedated or anaesthetised during the operation. You may be advised to have a nerve block and be awake or sedated if you have health issues that increase your risk with a general anaesthetic.

Will I see or feel anything during the procedure?

It is common to feel some tugging and pressure sensation during the procedure but you will not feel any sharp pain. Screens will be put up so you will not be able to see the operation. An anaesthetist will monitor you closely throughout your operation.

How long does the block last?

The numbness will usually last a few hours, sometimes up to 24 hours. Sometimes the anaesthetist will use a plastic catheter next to the nerves and connect to a special pump. The pump delivers local anaesthetic to the nerves and can provide pain relief for a few days.

As the block wears off, your leg/foot will feel tingly and maybe hot. You should take painkillers, as prescribed, before the block wears off as pain can appear suddenly and become severe.

What are the benefits of a nerve block?

- Pain relief during and after the operation.
The nerve block reduces the need for strong pain killer medications like morphine (that can cause side effects to make you feel itchy, drowsy, sick and constipated).
- To avoid general anaesthetic.
This helps avoid the side effects of general anaesthetics like sore throat and nausea resulting in a faster recovery.

What are the potential risks?

- Failure of the block; most nerve blocks work well. If not, the anaesthetist will recommend a general anaesthesia or supplement your block with more local anaesthetic.
- Bleeding and bruising at the injection site.
- Allergic reactions.