

OTHER TREATMENT OPTIONS

Giving other stronger pain medicines such as morphine. The surgeon can inject numbing medicine directly into the skin, but this usually only gives limited pain relief

ADVICE ON LEAVING THE HOSPITAL

Please give regular pain relief even if your child looks comfortable so that the medicines are working well when the block wears off. The numbness and weakness may last up to 12 hours so please watch your child as they walk or crawl as they may fall. When they are still numb, do not use hot-water bottles, give your child a hot bath, or put them near a radiator. They might not be able to tell that it is too hot, and could get burned. They might also not be able to move away if their muscles are still feeling weak.



HOW TO CONTACT US

If you have any concerns following a caudal block, please contact CHI-C Switch board at:

Tel: 01 409 6100 and ask for **Pager 8300** (Pain Management Nurse) from Monday to Friday 9am-5pm or **Pager 8528** (Anaesthesiologist on call) outside of these hours.

ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS



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Connolly | Crumlin | Tallaght | Temple Street

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Children's Health Ireland



Caudal Block Pain Relief

Information for
Parents & Carers



WHAT IS A CAUDAL BLOCK?

A caudal block is an injection of a numbing pain medicine like an epidural that is someone may have during labour or after surgery. The caudal epidural space is at the bottom of the spine. Medicine is injected here by your anaesthesiologist which will numb the nerves that cause pain. Sometimes a small plastic tube (catheter) will be left in place to give numbing medicine for a couple of days after surgery if needed.

HOW IS A CAUDAL BLOCK GIVEN?

After discussing this with you, your child's anaesthesiologist will perform the caudal block after your child is under general anaesthesia so they will not be uncomfortable. The skin will be cleaned and a needle is used to inject the numbing medicine with your child lying on their side. The needle is then removed.

BENEFITS OF A CAUDAL BLOCK

Your child will feel little or no pain when the block is working. This means no strong painkillers like morphine will be needed, which have lots of side effects (nausea, vomiting, itching, sleepiness and slowing breathing). Avoiding these side effects often means your child will recover faster and be able to go home sooner.

If extra medicines are added to the caudal block, they may make your child sleepy after their surgery. They make the caudal block last a little longer too.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS OR SIDE EFFECTS?

All procedures have some potential risks and side effects. We take care to avoid as many risks as we can. Most side effects are temporary and serious complications following a caudal block are very rare. For most children, the benefits of having good pain relief outweigh the risks. If this is not the case, your anaesthesiologist will discuss this with you and decide on a different plan for your child before surgery.

COMMON SIDE EFFECTS (UP TO 1 IN 10 CHILDREN)

Not enough pain relief

If the caudal block is not working as well as it should, different pain relief will be given to keep your child comfortable

Heavy, "wobbly" or "jelly" legs

This happens because of the numbing medicine used for the block. It is temporary and strength returns as the numbness wears off.

Please watch your child walking or crawling for the first 12 hours as they may fall.

Difficulty peeing

Most children will be able to pee once they have had enough to drink. Sometimes a child will be unable to pee and will need a small tube passed into the bladder to empty it. This is temporary and will return to normal once the block wears off

Please tell your nurse if your child has not peed or had a wet nappy for more than 4 hours after surgery

LESS COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

Itching

This can happen if morphine-like medicines are added to the numbing medicine. It is treated with an antihistamine.

VERY RARE SIDE EFFECTS

Infection

We take full sterile precautions before injecting the numbing medicine, so this very rarely happens

Bleeding

This usually only happens if your child has a problem with bleeding or is on medicine that interferes with bleeding. Sometimes bruising is seen at the injection site. Very rarely a blood clot may form in the caudal space and cause complications that need further treatment, including surgery.

Injection to the bloodstream

This can happen if the numbing medicine is accidentally injected into the blood stream. It can cause seizures or heart problems that need treatment and ICU care. Safety checks before injecting the medicine reduce the risk of this happening

Injection into the spinal fluid

This may mean your child is more numb than expected or the numbness is higher than expected. Sometimes their breathing can be affected. It is temporary and they will be monitored closely until the numbness wears off.