

CARE AT HOME AFTER LOWER LIMB NERVE BLOCKS

Lower limb nerve blocks are performed on the hips, around the knee or the ankle and feet. They will provide excellent pain relief by making the leg numb and the muscles weak.

Your child's leg should remain rested for support and protection until the strength in their leg has returned to normal. This can take up to 12 hours. Please take care around heat sources, such as fires or radiators, due to the risk of burns, or other injuries while their leg is still feeling numb. Avoid putting too much pressure on their leg while it is numb and allow your child to rest their leg fully until the numbness has gone and the power has returned in their leg.

Remember: Ask your nurse if you are unsure about anything regarding your child's care.



HOW TO CONTACT US

If you have any concerns following a lower limb nerve 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. If your child becomes unwell for any reason after a general anaesthetic, please contact your local hospital or GP and remember to tell them your child has had a recent nerve block.

ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS



Disclaimer & Copyright ©2022, Children's Health Ireland at Crumlin, Dublin 12. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the copyright holder. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information provided is accurate and in accord with standards accepted at the time of printing.

www.childrenshealthireland.ie

Connolly | Crumlin | Tallaght | Temple Street

CRA Registered Charity Number (RCN): 20202295

Revenue Charitable Status CHY: 22235

Sláinte Leanaí Éireann



Children's Health Ireland

Pain Relief After Lower Limb Nerve Blocks

Information for Parents & Carers



WHAT IS A LOWER LIMB NERVE BLOCK?

Nerves carry sensation messages (hot, cold and pain) and movement messages to our skin, bones, muscles and tendons. A nerve block will temporarily block these messages, leaving the area the nerve supplies feeling numb, and the muscles feeling weak. This injection around a nerve or group of nerves will stop your child feeling pain when they have surgery, and reduce the pain felt as your child recovers after surgery too. An experienced anaesthesiologist will inject a numbing medicine around the target nerves when your child is under general anaesthesia.

WHY HAVE A LOWER LIMB NERVE BLOCK?

Nerve blocks give one of the best forms of pain control. Having a nerve block means your child is less likely to need strong painkillers like morphine. Strong painkillers have many unpleasant side effects such as feeling sleepy, seeing or hearing things that do not exist (hallucinations), feeling sick, finding it harder to poo (constipation) and breathing slower. Avoiding these side effects often means a faster recovery and earlier discharge home. The numbness following a nerve block stops pain when the area is moved after surgery. This helps make physiotherapy easier after surgery.

WHAT ARE THE COMMON SITES FOR LOWER LIMB NERVE BLOCKS?

There are many types of lower limb nerve blocks. The area will be chosen based on the exact side of the body and type of surgery your child is going to have. Most common sites include the hip, around the knee or at the foot and ankle. Your anaesthesiologist will tell you which nerve block is suitable for your child's specific operation and discuss the risks/benefits of the nerve block with you.

HOW IS THE NERVE BLOCK PERFORMED?

After your child is asleep, their leg or hip will be positioned for the nerve block. The skin around the injection site is cleaned with antiseptic solution. The nerves are found using an ultrasound machine or by using a machine that makes your muscle twitch. Once the nerves are seen, numbing medicine is injected close to the nerve and the needle removed.

The hips, legs and feet have 2 groups of nerves supplying them (lumbar plexus and sacral plexus). This means that for many different leg surgeries, both of these nerve groups will need to be blocked with numbing medicine in 2 different places. These injections will happen when your child is under general anaesthetic and cannot feel it. A catheter is a very small plastic tube that sometimes is left in place for a few days after the operation to give continuous numbing medicine around the nerves, after major surgery. Your anaesthesiologist will discuss this with you if your child may require a continuous catheter for ongoing delivery of numbing medicine after their surgery.

Hip, leg and foot surgery can also be done using a spinal block, epidural or caudal block. These procedures numb the whole body from the belly button down. Ask your doctor or nurse for more information on spinal blocks, an epidural or a caudal block. An epidural catheter is often left in place for continuous numbing after major surgery to the leg or hips.

RISKS OF NERVE BLOCKS

Mild bruising or mild bleeding where the nerve block was performed is often seen, but usually does not need treatment. Sometimes the nerve block may fail to provide complete pain relief. If this happens, extra pain medication will be given to your child. Other risks, usually only last for a few hours if they happen.

These include:

Drug allergy or Toxicity.

These are very rare but potentially serious complications. Your child will be monitored closely for any signs of these issues and treated immediately by their anaesthesiologist if they happen.

Nerve Damage

This is very rare and usually will resolve with time without needing any further treatment. If your child's arm is not back to normal 48 hours after surgery please contact our pain team for follow up.

Bruising/Bleeding at the injection site

This is treated by applying pressure to the area and rarely requires any further treatment.