Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

About Your Continuous Lower Extremity Nerve Block Catheter

This information explains your continuous lower extremity nerve block catheter. It explains what it is, how it works, and what to expect once it's placed.

About your nerve block catheter

A nerve block is when a local anesthetic is used to block a group of nerves from feeling pain. A local anesthetic is medicine used to make an area of your body numb.

With a **continuous nerve block**, you get the medicine through a catheter (a thin, flexible tube) that's connected to a pump. A continuous nerve block can stay in place for a few days to help you feel less pain after your surgery. Your anesthesiologist will program your pump to give you the right amount of local anesthetic. Your anesthesiologist is a doctor with special training in medicine to help with pain before, during, and after surgery. You may need more or less medicine depending on how much pain you feel after surgery.

With a **continuous lower extremity nerve block**, the local anesthetic blocks the nerves in your lower extremity (leg) from feeling pain. The nerve block catheter will be placed near or around your groin, thigh, or knee. From there, it can reach the nerves that go to your leg.

Your continuous lower extremity nerve block will take away most of your pain. It may not take away all of it. You may also need to take pain medicine while you have the nerve block.

What to expect after surgery

Your nerve block catheter will be placed during surgery. It's normal for your leg to feel numb right after your surgery.

About 8 to 16 hours after your surgery, the stronger local anesthetic you got during your surgery will wear off. You'll be able to move your leg more easily. You may have some discomfort as you regain feeling. Your nurse will program your pump to give you local anesthesia through your nerve block catheter. They may also give you pain medicine to help with any discomfort.

Ask your nurse for pain medicine before going to bed the first night after your surgery. This will help keep from waking up in pain after the numbness wears off.

What to expect while you have a nerve block catheter

- You may have some fluid leaking from around your nerve block catheter. This is the local anesthetic. This is normal and does not mean it is not working. If your nerve block catheter is leaking, tell your nurse.
- Your nerve block catheter may fall out or be pulled out by accident. If this happens, tell your nurse. Do not throw away your catheter.
- Be careful when walking around. Your leg will be weak because of the local anesthetic and may not support all your weight. Tell your nurse if you think you need someone to help you walk.
- Tell your nurse if you cannot feel your leg. Your pump may need to be turned off for a little while. It can be turned back on when you can feel your leg again.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider if you have any of the following:

- A rash or hives anywhere on your body.
- Numbness around your mouth.
- A metallic taste in your mouth.

- A ringing sound in your ears.
- Feeling light headed.
- Confusion.
- Slurred speech.
- Chest pain.
- Twitching anywhere on your body.
- Seizures (uncontrolled shaking or stiffening of your body).

Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns, call the Anesthesia Pain Service at 212-639-6851. You can reach a staff member Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. After 4 p.m., during the weekend, and on holidays, call 212-639-2000 and ask for the anesthesia pain doctor on call.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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