Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

About Your Nerve Block Catheter

This information explains your nerve block catheter. It explains what it is, how it works, and what to expect when it's placed. It also explains how to care for the catheter at home.

What is a nerve block catheter?

A nerve block catheter is a thin, flexible tube. It gives you medicine to numb the area of your body where you're having surgery. Numb means you do not feel anything. This medicine works by blocking the group of nerves in this area from feeling pain.

You may have some numbness or be completely numb in that area. This will depend on the type of surgery you're having and where the catheter is placed.

You also may have weakness in the same area as the numbness. This weakness will go away a few hours after the catheter is stopped or removed.

How is a nerve block catheter helpful?

You will have less pain after the surgery while your nerve block catheter is in place. The surgery area will be numb, so you will not need as much other pain medicine. Pain medicine, such as opioids, may cause:

- Nausea (feeling like you're going to throw up).
- Constipation (having fewer bowel movements than usual).
- Drowsiness (feeling very sleepy).
- Itching.

When is a nerve block catheter placed?

An anesthesiologist will place your nerve block catheter just before or during your surgery. An anesthesiologist (a-nes-THEE-zee-AH-loh-jist) is a doctor with special training in using anesthesia. This is medicine to help with pain before, during, and after surgery.

How does a nerve block catheter work?

The nerve block catheter is placed under your skin, next to where you're having surgery. It's connected to an electronic pump that puts the local anesthetic (numbing medicine) through the catheter. There is a medicine bag filled with the local anesthetic connected to the pump.

Your care team will show you what the pump looks like.

For about 3 days, the pump will keep going as it safely give you the medicine. You may also be able to give yourself an extra dose of the medicine if you need it. Your care team will show you how to do this.

What are the risks of a nerve block catheter?

While you have the nerve block catheter, there is a chance you will have some side effects. The side effects can be caused by the numbing medicine or where the catheter is placed.

These are signs of problems with the medicine:

- Dizziness
- A metallic taste in your mouth
- Numbness around your mouth
- Ringing sound in your ears
- Heart racing
- Seizures (uncontrolled shaking or stiffening of your body)
- Shortness of breath

These are signs of problems around the catheter site:

- Pus

- Swelling
- Tenderness
- Pain or redness.
- Rash or hives

If you notice any of these problems:

1. **Stop the pump**: Press the Start/Stop button on the bottom left of the pump. Then press Yes to stop the pump.
2. **Clamp the tubing.** Use the clamp that is already on the tubing.
3. **Call for help.**
    - **If you have seizures or it's hard to breath, call 911 before calling the MSK Anesthesia Pain Team.**
    - Call the MSK operator at 212-639-2000. Tell the operator that you have a nerve block catheter. Ask them to page the Anesthesia Pain Team at pager number 7553. Give them a phone number you can be reached at.

Caring for the catheter and pump at home

Follow these instructions:

- Keep the bandage on the catheter clean and dry. Do not take a bath or shower while the catheter is in place. You may take a sponge bath.
- Do not put the pump in water.
- Do not let the pump get very hot or very cold.
- Make sure all the connections are tight and that the tubing is not kinked (bent) or knotted.
- Check that the white clamp along the tubing is open and moves freely. Make sure it is not clicked closed.
- You may have some numbing medicine leaking from around your nerve block catheter. This is normal and does not mean it is not working. You may add another clear bandage to help keep it in place. Do not take off or change the bandage yourself. You may pull out the catheter by accident.
- Keep all labels on the pump and tubing.

How do I protect and care for my numb body part?

The nerve block catheter will make an area of your body numb. Follow these instructions to stay safe.

- Make sure to keep the arm or leg that is numb close to

your body.

  - If your arm is numb, keep it in a sling. Make sure your wrist is fully supported.
  - If your leg is numb or weak use crutches or ask someone for help when walking or changing positions. This will help prevent falls and injury.

- Do not put hot or cold objects right on the area that is numb. This includes a heating pad or ice pack. They can harm your skin without you noticing.
  - Do not apply pressure on the numb area of your body.
  - If you have pain at the surgical site, use the pain medicine ordered by your surgery team.

Taking out the catheter

Your care team will tell you when it's safe to take out the catheter. You can do this at home. You do not need to return to the office.

Take out your catheter on this date:

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1. Gather the supplies your care team gave you to take out your catheter. This includes:
   - Adhesive remover
   - Alcohol pads

- Gauze
- Bandage (Band-Aid®)
- Clear dressing

2. Clean your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
   - If you're washing your hands with soap and water, wet your hands and apply soap. Rub your hands together well for at least 20 seconds, then rinse. Dry your hands with a paper towel. Use the same towel to turn off the faucet.
   - If you're using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, cover your hands with it. Rub them together until they're dry.
3. At the end of your infusion, press the power button on the right side of the pump. Then press Yes to power down. This will shut off the pump.
4. Clamp the tubing. Use the clamp that is already on the tubing.
5. Carefully take off the bandage covering the catheter.
6. Firmly hold the catheter close to where it enters your skin.
7. Gently pull and slowly take out the catheter. It should come out easy with a gentle pull. **Do not cut the**

catheter!

Look at the catheter to be sure that there is a dark tip at the end of it. If you do not see a dark tip, call the MSK Anesthesia Pain Team right away. You should also call them right away if the catheter does not come out easily.

Call the MSK operator at 212-639-2000. Tell the operator that you have a nerve block catheter. Ask them to page the Anesthesia Pain Team at pager number 7553. Give them a phone number you can be reached at.

1. Place a bandage (Band-Aid®) over the area where the catheter was.
2. Unscrew the catheter from the clear tubing and throw out the catheter.
3. Place the attached tubing, pump, and carrying case in the return packaging your care team gave you.

Returning the pump

To return the pump, follow the instructions that came in your InfuBLOCK box. This will tell you how to send the pump back. You can also scan this QR code below with your phone's camera for instructions.

Figure 1: Return pump QR code

When to call your healthcare provider

To talk with the MSK Anesthesia Pain Team, call the MSK operator at 212-639-2000. Tell the operator that you have a nerve block catheter. Ask them to page the Anesthesia Pain Team at pager number 7553. Give them a phone number you can be reached at. Call them if you have any questions or concerns about your nerve block catheter. Call 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 lightheaded
- Confusion
- Slurred speech

- Chest pain
- Twitching anywhere on your body
- Seizures (uncontrolled shaking or stiffening of your body)
- Shortness of breath
- Any issue at the catheter site including:
  - Pus
  - Swelling
  - Tenderness
  - Pain or redness at the catheter site
  - Rash or hives

Resources

Visit the InfuSystem website for helpful videos and more resources:

- InfuSystem website

http://www.infusystem.com/block/patients

For troubleshooting videos related to your pump, you can visit https://qrco.de/cadd-solis_hpca_troubleshooting_videos or scan the QR code below:

Figure 2: Troubleshoot QR Code

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

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

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