

# Managing Your Pain with a Peripheral Nerve Block

## Information for patients and families

Read this booklet to learn about:

- Why it is important
- What it is
- How it works
- Possible side effects



## **Why is it important to relieve my pain?**

You will get better faster if your pain is well controlled.

Less pain means less stress on your body. Your body heals better with less stress. You can breathe deeply and cough and move more easily.

Less pain will decrease your risk of problems such as:

- infection
- trouble breathing
- muscle spasms
- heart attack

Your health care team will work with you to help you manage your pain. One way to control your pain is with a peripheral nerve block.

## **What is a peripheral nerve block?**

It is a special way to manage your pain. It will help control your pain for a long time—from a couple of hours up to a couple of days. A doctor or nurse injects local anesthetic (numbing medicine) around the nerves where you are hurting.

There are 3 ways that they can inject the medicine:

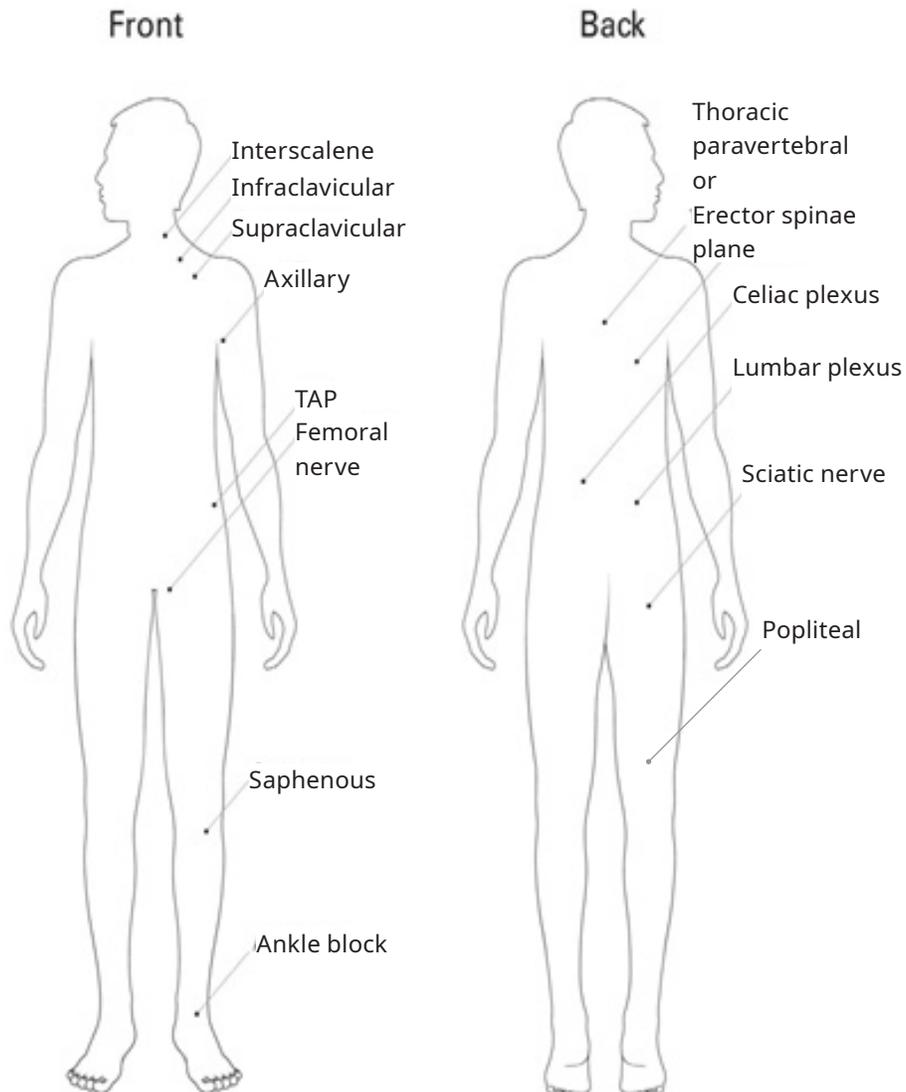
- A one-time needle shot



- Connecting a tube to your nerve block site to deliver medicine during certain times
- Connecting a tube to your nerve block site to deliver medicine all the time through a pump



## What type of peripheral nerve block do I have?



## **What are common side effects and complications?**

The most common side effects and problems are minor and easy to treat. The pain team that manages your pain will plan your care to help avoid these problems.

Some side effects you may get are:

- Weak feeling in your legs
- Heavy feeling in your legs
- Numbness around where you had your surgery
- Redness and swelling around the area you got your needle injection
- Bleeding where you had your needle injection. This complication is rare
- A slight drop in blood pressure when you stand up. If this happens you may feel nauseous (want to throw up) or dizzy

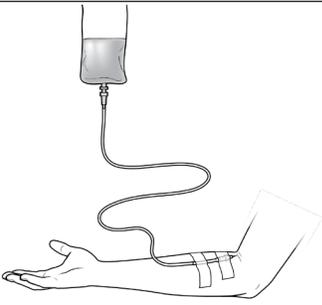
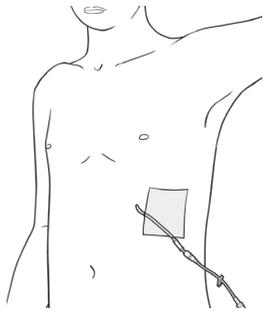
Some rare problems that could happen are:

- A metallic taste
- Numbness around your lips known as perioral numbness
- A sensation of ringing in your ears known as tinnitus

Other very rare but possible problems include allergic reactions, seizures or a heart attack.

## I have a peripheral nerve block. Will I get other pain medicine too?

Yes. You may get more than one kind of pain medicine. These can include opioid pain medicine, anti-inflammatory medicine and others. Below is a list of ways that these medicines may be given to you.

What it is called	How it works
<p>Pills or tablets</p> 	<p>Pills or tablets swallowed by mouth.</p>
<p>Intravenous (IV)</p> 	<p>Intravenous means inside the vein. Pain medicine can be given into the vein through a small needle or a plastic tube called a catheter.</p>
<p>Intravenous Patient Controlled Analgesia (IV PCA)</p> 	<p>This is an intravenous medicine that you give yourself by pressing a button.</p>
<p>Feeding tube</p> 	<p>Pain medicine put through your feeding tube if you have one.</p>
<p>Needle injection</p> 	<p>A needle given into your muscle or under your skin.</p>

## What if I still feel pain?

Tell your nurse, doctor or other members of your health care team if you still have pain.

The health care team will ask you rate your pain on a 0 to 10 point scale.

- 0 is no pain
- 10 is the worst pain you can imagine

You can also use words such as mild, moderate, or severe to describe your pain.

## You and your family are an important part of the team that manages your pain.

For more information about managing your pain at UHN:

- Visit the UHN website at [www.uhn.ca](http://www.uhn.ca) and search for Department of Anesthesia and Pain Management or go to [www.uhn.ca/Surgery/Anesthesia](http://www.uhn.ca/Surgery/Anesthesia).
- Visit [www.uhnpatienteducation.ca](http://www.uhnpatienteducation.ca) and see health topic "Pain & Anesthesia" under General Topics.



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