

Having your operation under a local anaesthetic

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please contact the PALS desk on 01271 314090 or at ndht.pals@nhs.net.

What is a local anaesthetic?

A local anaesthetic is a medicine that is used to numb a specific area of your body.

Why is it needed?

Your surgeon has decided that your operation can be performed safely and comfortably without the need for a general anaesthetic.

The use of a local anaesthetic avoids the potential complications and side effects of other forms of anaesthetic. This enables you to recover more safely and more rapidly from your procedure.

What does it involve?

A local anaesthetic involves injections that numb a small part of the body.

Your surgeon will ask you to keep quite still while the local anaesthetic is given.

The operation will only go ahead when you and your surgeon are sure that the area is numb.

You will remain alert and aware of your surroundings.

A sheet can be put up between you and the surgeon, so that you need not see the operation unless you want to.

What are the alternatives?

Sedation, nerve blocks or a general anaesthetic can also be used for patients having surgery, as long as it is medically safe to do so.

You will be able to discuss these options at the pre-operative assessment appointment.

Special preparations

Arrangements:

- Please arrange for a responsible adult to take you home after your operation. Do not use public transport.
- For the first 24 hours after surgery, please arrange to stay where you will have access to a telephone in case you are worried and need to contact someone for advice or assistance.
- Please make sure you have a supply of mild painkillers, such as Paracetamol or Ibuprofen, in case you need them after your operation.
- If you take blood-thinning medicines (e.g. aspirin, clopidogrel, warfarin, dabigatran, rivaroxiban, apixaban), please notify your surgeon in advance so that a plan can be made.

What to bring:

- Any drugs or medicines you are taking
- Any inhalers normally used
- Slippers and dressing gown
- Something to read

On the day:

- Please have a bath or shower the morning of your surgery, to make sure that the skin around the surgical site is clean. This reduces the risk of infection.
- Unless you have been told otherwise, you can eat and drink on the day of surgery.
- Unless your doctor or nurse tells you otherwise, please take your medicines as usual on the day of surgery.
- Please leave valuable items at home.
- Please remove all make-up, lipstick and nail polish so that we can monitor your skin colour and oxygen levels during the procedure.
- Jewellery including body piercing must also be removed. This is partly to prevent infection and partly because metal objects can cause skin burns. You may keep your wedding ring on if you wear one, but your nurse will make sure it is safely covered with a special plaster.
- You can usually wear your glasses, hearing aids or dentures (if you have them) throughout the procedure.

How will I feel during the procedure?

You may feel some discomfort during the injection of local anaesthetic.

You may notice a warm, tingling sensation as the anaesthetic begins to take effect.

You will remain alert and aware of your surroundings but free from pain at the site of surgery.

How will I feel afterwards?

Immediately after your surgery, you should not be in any discomfort.

As the local anaesthetic wears off, you may need to take mild painkillers (such as Paracetamol and Ibuprofen) to reduce any discomfort. We will advise you on what kind of painkillers to take before you leave hospital.

What happens after the procedure?

Following your operation, you will be taken back to your bedspace on the ward or to our recovery area.

You will usually be offered a drink and something to eat such as toast or biscuits.

Once your dressings have been checked, you are comfortable and you are able to get around safely, you will be ready to leave hospital.

Please ask the person who will be taking you home to telephone the ward to find out what time you will be ready to leave.

If you have any pain or discomfort, please tell the nurse before you go home.

What are the risks?

Surgery under local anaesthetic is very safe.

Very rare problems include either an allergic reaction or when too much local anaesthetic gets into your blood, both of which can make you very unwell (breathing problems, low blood pressure or loss of consciousness).

All these problems are far less common than with other forms of anaesthetic.

Aftercare

We will give you advice on what to do and expect over the next few days.

You may feel tired when you get home. Rest for the remainder of the day.

You may eat and drink normally.

Do not bath or shower for 24 hours.

Unless told otherwise, you may take your own medicines as before.

If pain prevents you from sleeping, a mild painkiller may help. We will advise you on what kind of painkillers to take before you leave hospital.

If you need medicines to take home, we normally get this for you from the hospital pharmacy. You will receive an invoice through the post for the prescription charges unless you are exempt from payment.

Please ask your nurse or surgeon regarding the timing of your return to normal activities (e.g. driving, working, etc.) and for advice on any wound care required (e.g. removal of stitches, dressings changes, etc.)

If you have a severe pain, bleeding or any other problems, contact your GP or, within the first 24 hours, please return to the Accident & Emergency Department.

Follow up

Arrangements will be made for any follow-up treatment you may need.

Further information

NHS choices (www.nhs.uk)

The Royal College of Anaesthetists (www.rcoa.ac.uk)

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

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