

Going Home After a Lower Extremity Nerve Block (Foot, Ankle, Leg)

If you have questions or concerns, please ask your physician or nurse.

Your physician has recommended a nerve block as the desired anesthesia for your surgery. A nerve block is a shot of numbing medicine that prevents you from feeling any pain at the site of surgery. This brochure explains the care needed after you leave the hospital. Carefully follow any instructions given to you by your surgeon and nurse.

Procedure

The nerve block may be given before or after your surgery. You will lose all feeling and movement in the leg where you have the surgery. This may last 24 to 48 hours, depending on the type of block you received.

Going home

Protect your foot or leg

Typically, a nerve block may last up to 24 hours. However, if you had a sciatic nerve block, it may last 48 hours.

During this time:

- **It is important to protect your toes, feet, and legs from injury.**
- **You cannot control foot or leg movement until the nerve block wears off.**
- You will not be able to tell if your leg is twisted or if anything is pushing against it.

Protect your foot and leg from hot and cold temperatures. Your sense of hot and cold is also lessened until the block wears off.

The block may affect the way you sense your foot or leg's position and location. You may feel like you are not sure where or how it is placed or positioned. Your foot or leg may feel different or heavier. **This can affect your balance and increase your risk of falling.**

Until the block completely wears off, and all feeling and movement is completely back to normal, please take special care to prevent falling.

If you had surgery on your foot, ankle, knee or upper leg, please follow these instructions:

Do not try to stand or put weight on your leg until the numbness wears off completely **and** until your surgeon tells you it is safe to do so. Follow your surgeon's activity instructions to help ensure timely healing.

Use crutches to stand up or walk.

If you must use stairs, be careful. Climb up and down stairs in the sitting position. When climbing **up** the stairs, pull up backward with the **good** leg, step by step. When going down, slide **down**, step by step, with your **good** leg.

If you had surgery on your knee or upper leg:

You may be given a cooling unit for that area. The cooling unit helps relieve pain and swelling. Be sure to carefully follow the cooling unit guidelines.

Stay comfortable

- Begin to take your pain medicine as soon as you notice the block starting to wear off. The first sign may be some tingling. Take your first dose at that time, which may be around dinner time. If it is time for your next dose, take your pain medicine before you go to bed. Then, take the medicine on the schedule prescribed by your physician, as needed for pain.
- **Do not wait to feel severe pain.** It is much better to prevent the build-up of pain than to try to stop it once it is there.
- Contact your surgeon about any severe pain not controlled by your medicine.

Special instructions

Have someone with you at home after your surgery. **Remember that you will not have use of your foot or leg.**

Carefully follow any instructions given to you by your surgeon, anesthesiologist and nurse.

Please feel free to page the anesthesiologist 24 hours a day at 312.695.7039 if you have any questions about your anesthesia care.