

## Benefits of Regional Anaesthesia

- Avoidance of risks of general anaesthesia.
- Better pain relief afterwards.
- Less need for morphine based pain relief which can make you feel sick, drowsy and unwell.
- You can leave hospital earlier, on the same day as your operation.
- You can eat and drink immediately after surgery.
- Less confusion after surgery in older people.
- You will be back to your normal self quicker than with general anaesthesia.
- You can listen to a music device during your operation



## After the operation

Your arm will be numb and weak for 12-18 hours. During this time you will not be able to use your arm.

As the nerve block wears off, you may experience 'pins and needles' in your arm. This is normal.

### Looking after your numb arm at home

You will be given a sling for support and protection. Keep your arm in the sling until it feels normal again.

Do not sleep on your numb arm.

Do not drive or operate machinery.

Do not lift small children or heavy items.

Keep the numb arm away from heat, fire or radiators; you will not feel it.

You will be prescribed pain relief tablets for when the nerve block wears off. Take these tablets before you go to bed, and at regular intervals for the first 2 days.

### Do not wait until the nerve block wears off before taking pain relief.

We will provide you with a contact number should you experience prolonged numbness.

We may call you after your operation to ask about your pain relief.

# Regional Anaesthesia for shoulder, arm and hand surgery

## An information guide for patients



## Regional Anaesthesia

Operations on the shoulder, arm and hand can be performed under regional anaesthesia alone, by numbing the nerves in the arm. This has many potential benefits over general anaesthesia.

An anaesthetist is a doctor who specialises in both general and regional anaesthesia.

An anaesthetist will find the nerves in your arm using an ultrasound probe, and inject local anaesthetic around them.

This makes the arm numb and immobile, allowing you to have the surgery without needing general anaesthesia.



## The injection

The nerve block injection is performed in the theatre suite, where you are closely monitored.

The anaesthetist will numb the skin, thus minimising any discomfort during the injection.

You will be given sedative medicine to help you relax during the procedure.

The nerve block injection will be in one of the following locations:

- In the side of your neck
- Around your collar bone
- In your armpit
- Around the elbow or forearm

Your arm will become numb and weak over the next 20-30 minutes. Your anaesthetist will confirm that the arm is totally numb prior to surgery.

## During the operation

You may feel movement or light pressure on the arm.

A barrier is placed between you and the surgeon.

You may listen to music on your portable device.

You can request heavier sedation if you wish.

## Risks of nerve blocks

### Injection at side of neck:

- Droopy eyelid and hoarse voice until block wears off.

### Injection around collar bone

- Risk of lung damage. Less than 1 in 1000.

### All sites

- **Nerve damage**

Risk of long term nerve damage is between 1 in 5000 and 1 in 10,000.

0.5-1% of patients may notice prolonged numbness of the arm, however in the vast majority of these cases, normal sensation will return within 72 hours.

Over 95% of patients who notice prolonged numbness will have full return of sensation within 6 weeks.

There is a risk of nerve damage after any operation **regardless of the type of anaesthetic used.**

- This may be due to the operation, the position you lie or the tourniquet (tight band to stop bleeding) around your arm.
- Swelling around the operation site or pre-existing medical problems such as diabetes may also lead to nerve damage.