

# Looking after yourself after having a local anaesthetic block

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## Information for patients

This leaflet gives you advice to follow after having a local anaesthetic block.

### What is a local anaesthetic block?

It is an injection of local anaesthetic near a nerve to block pain during and after surgery. We use a local anaesthetic block for operations on the arm, hand or foot.

It is possible to do the operation comfortably with just a nerve block. Sometimes you have a block and a general anaesthetic (you are asleep), or sedation (being drowsy or in a light sleep) on its own. You need to know how to take care of yourself following your operation because the area that has had the block can be numb and heavy for several hours afterwards. During this time you may injure the affected part of the body and not notice.

### Do's and Don'ts

Please follow these Do's and Don'ts.

#### Do

- After arm and shoulder surgery: keep your arm in a sling if we have given you one
- After foot surgery: keep your protective boot on if we have given you one. Avoid walking around with an unprotected numb foot.
- Take your regular painkillers. Even though you are numb and pain free, it may become uncomfortable when the block wears off.
- Keep the affected arm or leg out of harm's way.

#### Don't

- Try to drive or operate machinery
- Rest your affected arm or leg near anything hot, for example, an oven or radiator. You may burn yourself and not feel it.
- Allow your arm or leg to be in a place where it may be accidentally injured.
- Carry out kitchen tasks, for example cooking, as it may be dangerous.

As your block wears off you will probably feel pins and needles in your fingers or toes (depending on what limb was blocked). Do not worry, this is normal. Local anaesthetic blocks are safe and complications are rare.

## Who can I contact with queries and concerns?

### Helpline:

- 020 3299 2188, 7am – 8pm
- 020 3299 5441, 8pm – 7am

You should contact the helpline if you notice any of the following symptoms:

- Unexplained breathlessness after a block to the arm or hand
- Pain that is not controlled by tablets. Please remember to start taking tablets regularly as soon as you get home, even if you have no pain.
- Your arm or foot is still numb or weak after two days. A block usually wears off between 8 to 24 hours but it can last up to three days.
- Your fingers or toes swell or change colour (compared with your other hand or foot).

### Sharing your information

We have teamed up with Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals in a partnership known as King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at Guy's or St Thomas'. To make sure everyone you meet always has the most up-to-date information about your health, we may share information about you between the hospitals.

### Care provided by students

We provide clinical training where our students get practical experience by treating patients. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you do not want students to be involved in your care. Your treatment will not be affected by your decision.

### PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS:

Tel: 020 3299 3601  
Fax: 020 3299 3626  
Email: [kch-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:kch-tr.pals@nhs.net)

You can also contact us by using our online form at [www.kch.nhs.uk/contact/pals](http://www.kch.nhs.uk/contact/pals)

PALS at Princess Royal University Hospital, Farnborough Common, Orpington, Kent BR6 8ND

Tel: 01689 863252  
Email: [kch-tr.palskent@nhs.net](mailto:kch-tr.palskent@nhs.net)

**If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact PALS on 020 3299 1844.**

[www.kch.nhs.uk](http://www.kch.nhs.uk)  
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King's College Hospital is part of King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre (ASHC), a pioneering collaboration between King's College London, and Guy's and St. Thomas', King's College Hospital and South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trusts.

For more information, visit [www.kingshealthpartners.org](http://www.kingshealthpartners.org) 