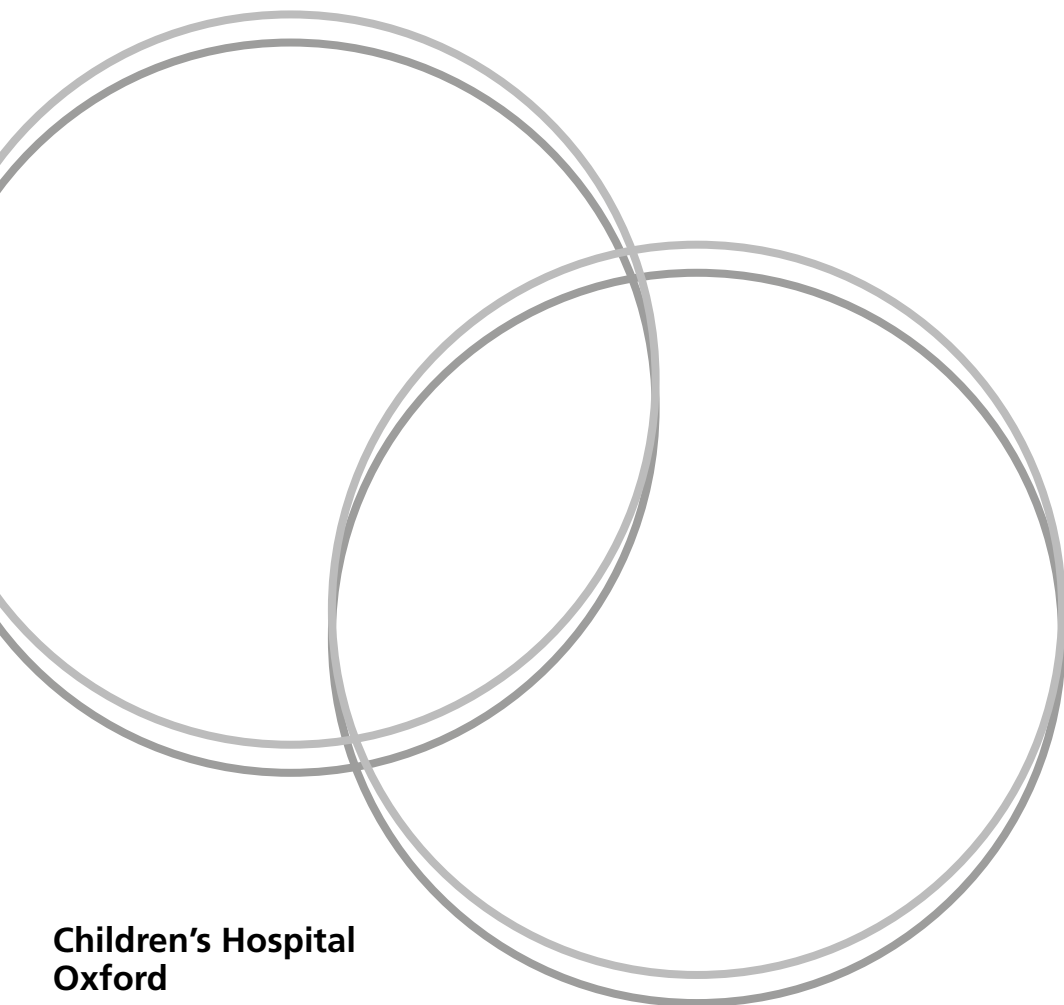




Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Caudal Block

Information for parents and carers



Children's Hospital
Oxford

This information sheet explains what caudal blocks are and why they might be used for your child.

Before your child has their operation, the anaesthetist will discuss the caudal block with you. They will be able to answer any questions you may have.

What is a caudal block?

A caudal block is a pain-relieving injection of local anaesthetic, or combination of local anaesthetic and pain relief medicine, which is put in at the bottom of the back (spine). This will make the lower half of your child's body feel numb (from their belly button downwards).

The injection will be given whilst your child is unconscious under a general anaesthetic.

Why does my child need a caudal block?

A caudal block can provide good pain relief after your child's operation, so they can recover more quickly. It normally provides pain relief for 3 to 12 hours, which is useful after surgery on the lower tummy, groin or legs. It reduces the need for stronger painkillers, such as morphine.

How is a caudal block carried out?

When your child is asleep under the general anaesthetic, they will be turned onto their side and their lower back will be cleaned. The anaesthetist will then insert a small needle or cannula into the base of your child's back, through which they will inject the local anaesthetic and pain medicine. The needle will then be removed.

Is a caudal block safe?

Caudal blocks have been used regularly for pain relief in children for more than 30 years and have an excellent safety record. Several large studies, both in the UK and abroad, have confirmed that caudal blocks are very safe.

Are there any side effects?

Failure

In a small number of children it may not be possible to carry out the caudal block, or it may not work. If this happens, your child will be given other pain relief to keep them comfortable after the operation.

Numbness or weakness

For the 3-12 hour period when the caudal block is working, your child's bottom and legs may feel numb or tingly (like pins and needles). They may also have weak legs and may find it difficult to crawl or walk.

Difficulty passing urine

Some children have trouble passing urine after a caudal block, and a small number may need a urinary catheter (a small tube into their bladder) to drain away urine. This problem will get better as the block wears off.

Bleeding, infection or nerve damage

It is rare for there to be complications from caudal blocks. Occasionally there can be bleeding or infection where the caudal block injection was given. Very rarely nerve damage can occur, which could cause weakness or pain. This is rarely permanent.

Are there any reasons my child shouldn't have a caudal block?

Please tell the anaesthetist if your child has any abnormalities in their back or spine, as this may mean a caudal block is not possible.

Will my child be in pain after the caudal block wears off?

It is important that your child is given regular pain medicine, including paracetamol and ibuprofen, before the caudal block wears off. This will minimise any pain following surgery. If your child is allowed home before the caudal block has worn off, you will be given instructions about how and when to give these pain medicines.

What do I need to check for at home?

If your child develops any of the following symptoms, please take them to your nearest Emergency Department (ED) immediately. Tell the staff your child has had a caudal block.

Signs to look out for:

- numbness, leg weakness or any change in feeling in your child's legs after 24 hours
- neck stiffness or a high temperature (above 37.5°C)
- not being able to pass urine or control their bowels
- a new headache, which becomes worse when sitting or standing up
- redness, tenderness or leaking of fluid or blood from the site where the injection was given (lower back, between buttocks)
- pain in their lower back.

How to contact us

If you would like further information, please contact the Children's Pain Management team.

Tel: **0300 304 7777** and ask for **Bleep 1400** (Pain Management Nurse)

If you need an interpreter or would like this information leaflet in another format, such as Easy Read, large print, Braille, audio, electronically or another language, please speak to the department where you are being seen. You will find their contact details on your appointment letter.

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