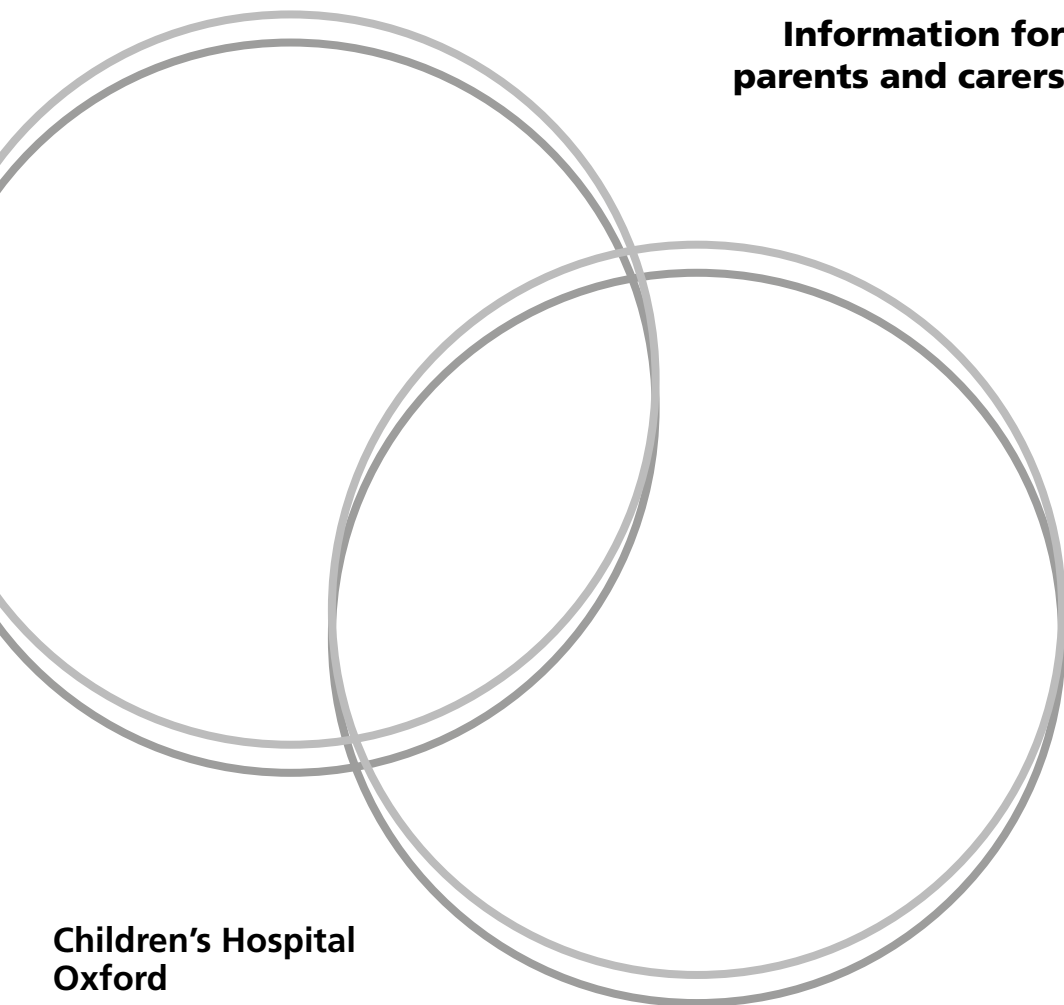




Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Local Anaesthetic Nerve Block for Children and Young People

Information for
parents and carers



Children's Hospital
Oxford

This information leaflet explains what a nerve block is and why it might be used for your child.

Before your child has their operation, the anaesthetist will discuss the nerve block with you (and your child, if appropriate) and will be able to answer any questions you may have.

What is a nerve block?

A nerve block is an injection of numbing local anaesthetic given around a nerve. It is used to reduce pain following surgery or after an injury, such as a broken bone. This is likely to be done when your child is unconscious under a general anaesthetic.

Why does my child need a nerve block?

A nerve block can provide very good pain relief after your child's operation, allowing them to recover faster and reducing the need for stronger pain medicine, such as morphine.

How is a nerve block carried out?

When your child is asleep under the general anaesthetic, the local anaesthetic will be injected around a nerve as a single injection. For more complex surgery a small tube (called a catheter) is placed next to the nerve and connected to a pump, which will deliver a continuous dose of local anaesthetic.

The local anaesthetic will numb the nerve and reduce the amount of pain your child might have after surgery or following their injury.

The nerve that is numbed will depend on the surgery your child is having or where their injury is.

How long will the nerve block last?

A single injection of local anaesthetic can last from 6 to 24 hours.

If your child has an infusion of local anaesthetic this may be used for between 1 to 4 days, depending on the type of surgery they are having.

Will my child be given other pain medicines with the nerve block?

Your child will be given oral pain medication, which works in different ways to treat pain and can be given together with the nerve block.

What happens if my child still feels pain when they have the nerve block?

A nerve block does not guarantee that your child won't have some pain. This may be for several reasons. For example, sometimes the nerve is not completely numbed by the local anaesthetic, or the area of the surgery is not numbed by the nerve that is being blocked.

There are several ways to reduce your child's pain. If they have a nerve infusion, the amount of local anaesthetic can be increased. Additional doses of oral pain medication can also be given. If this is not enough, stronger pain medication can be given, such as morphine, either as a liquid by mouth or through a drip (cannula) in a vein in their arm. The Pain Management team or anaesthetist can help work out the best way to help prevent any pain.

Are nerve blocks safe?

Nerve blocks are regularly used for pain relief after surgery in children and adults and have an excellent safety record. Several large studies, both in the UK and abroad, have confirmed that nerve blocks are very safe.

Are there any side effects?

Incomplete nerve block

Your child's nurse will regularly assess their pain.

As described earlier, the most common problem is that the nerve block does not completely numb the site of surgery, which can mean some pain is still felt.

Muscle weakness

The nerve block can cause muscle weakness. Your child may have a heavy feeling in the area of their body affected by the nerve block. If the nerve block is affecting your child's leg, it is very important to not let them get out of bed on their own, as they could fall over.

Bleeding, infection or nerve damage

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

Overdose of local anaesthetic

The signs of local anaesthetic overdose include a metallic taste in the mouth, tongue numbness, dizziness, ringing in the ears, blurred vision, and uncontrollable shaking. This can occur during a nerve infusion. **If your child complains of any of these symptoms, contact their nurse immediately.**

How is the catheter removed?

If your child has had a nerve block infusion and it is time to stop this method of pain relief, the nurse will remove all of the tape holding the catheter in place, and then remove the small tube. This is not painful, but may be uncomfortable. Some children often say that the most uncomfortable part is removing the tape. However, a special liquid can be used to help the sticky tape come off more easily.

Will my child be in pain after the nerve block has worn off?

Your child will be given regular pain medicines to help with pain control and stronger pain medicines, such as morphine, can be given as well.

How to contact us

If you would like further information, or if any medical staff treating your child have any questions about the local anaesthetic nerve block, 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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