

Having a Local or Regional Anaesthetic Adult Patient Information Leaflet

What is a Local or Regional (Block) Anaesthetic?

This is when the area of your body being operated on is made numb with an injection of a local anaesthetic. You will usually be awake when you have an operation under local anaesthetic but in some cases you may be able to choose to also have sedation. Sedation is when you receive a small amount of an anaesthetic or similar drug by injection to make you feel drowsy but not completely unconscious.

Before you arrive in hospital

Stopping smoking, reducing weight and exercising will significantly reduce the risk of complications and speed up your recovery following surgery.

On the day of your operation

You will have been given specific instructions about when you can eat and drink which you must follow. You should take all your regular medications unless you have been given specific instructions not to take them.

What actually happens on the day?

You will walk (if able) to the operating theatre where we will check your details and the operation you are having. You will have a cannula (small tube) inserted into a vein, normally on the back of the hand, which can be used to give you drugs to make you feel relaxed and sleepy if needed. This may cause some mild discomfort and you may develop bruising at the site of the cannula. In some cases it may be necessary to give you a general anaesthetic. We may give you oxygen via a mask during your operation.

If you are having a local or regional anaesthetic your Anaesthetist will ask you to keep quite still while the injections are given. You may notice a warm, tingly feeling as the injections start to work. Your operation will only go ahead when you and your Anaesthetist are sure that the area is numb. If you wish to watch certain operations on a screen you can ask the surgeon if this will be possible.

You will remain awake and aware of your surroundings unless you also have sedation to make you sleepy. A screen will be placed to prevent you seeing the operating site.

If you are having sedation you will be sleepy but may still be aware of events and sounds around you. A member of staff will always remain with you to explain what is happening and answer any questions you have.

If you have sedation you must not drive for at least 24 hours and depending on recovery from your surgery it may be longer. If you are taking strong pain killing drugs or sleeping tablets this may affect your ability to drive safely which is now a driving offence <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/drug-driving>.

What are the side effects and risks?

Very Common or Common (approx. 1 in 10 to 1 in 100)

- Feeling sick and vomiting
- Dizziness or blurred vision
- Headache
- Bruising

Uncommon (approx. 1 in 1000)

- Slow breathing
- Existing medical conditions may get worse

Rare risk (less than 1 in 10 000)

- Heart attack or stroke
- Allergic reactions
- Nerve Damage
- Equipment failure
- Death

For more information: www.rcoa.ac.uk/patientinfo

For help giving up smoking: Smokefree Norfolk 0800 0854 113

