

Anaesthetic Advice Sheet

Information for Patients, Relatives, & Carers

Local Anaesthetic

Local anaesthetic works by numbing the part of the body that will be operated on – similar to what you might experience at the dentist.

Digital Block

If you are having surgery on a toe, you will need to have two injections at the base of the toe to make it numb. Local anaesthetic at the level of the toes is temporary, lasting for 6-8 hours.

Ankle Block

For operations where the surgery will be carried out behind the level of the toes, you may have an ankle block. This involves blocking the sensation from each of the nerves that supply the foot at the level of the ankle.

As the anatomy behind the ankle varies a little from person to person, sometimes we use a nerve stimulator to accurately identify the nerve at this site. This sends a small electric current down the needle so that when the nerve is approached, it is stimulated. This means that the muscles controlled by that nerve begin to contract and relax, causing the foot to flick. While this is a strange sensation, it is not uncomfortable and helps us deliver the anaesthetic around the nerve with precision. The muscles will not be affected so you will still be able to move your foot although you will not be able to feel pain.

Local anaesthetic at the level of the ankle is temporary, lasting for 6-8 hours.

Popliteal Block

Used as an alternative to the ankle block for longer, or more complex procedures. An injection is given behind the knee. As the anatomy behind the knee varies a little from person to person, we use a nerve stimulator to accurately identify the nerves. This sends a small electric current down the needle so that when the nerve is approached, it is stimulated. This means that the muscles controlled by that nerve begin to contract and relax, causing the foot to flick. While this is a strange sensation, it is not uncomfortable and helps us deliver the anaesthetic around the nerve with precision.

Local anaesthetic at the level of the knee not only blocks sensation, but also the nerves that enable you to move your lower leg and foot. This is temporary, lasting for 24-36 hours. The benefit to you is that it should make the surgery more comfortable and minimise any post-operative pain.

A member of the surgery team will dispense crutches for you to use following this type of anaesthetic. You will not be able to walk until the anaesthetic wears off.

Sedation

For more anxious patients, local anaesthetic can be supplemented with oral anti-anxiety medication that can be obtained from your GP prior to surgery. If you feel that this might be appropriate, feel free to discuss this with your surgeon.