OHSU Regional Anesthesia
Peripheral Nerve Block Single Shot Home Instructions

What is a peripheral nerve block?
When performing a peripheral nerve block, the anesthesiologist will inject numbing medication near a cluster of nerves to numb only the area of your body that requires surgery. It is used to decrease pain during surgery and as you heal afterward. Your limb will feel numb and weak for 6-24 hours on average.

What do I need to know while the nerve block is working?
While your nerve block is working, you need to be extra careful. You will not be able to feel much in the area that is numb, and you won't be able to detect if your limb gets injured. You may not be able to feel pain, pressure, or extreme temperatures until the nerve block wears off. So, you need to protect the numb area from injury.

- Don't try to use the affected limb until the nerve block wears off. It will be too weak.
- Don't operate heavy machinery or attempt to drive until the nerve block wears off.
- Don't let anything bump into the numb area or rest on it. You won't be able to feel if you're injured or if there's too much pressure on the numb area.
- Be careful about extreme temperatures. You may not be able to feel discomfort from touching something that is too hot or too cold. You could get a burn or cold injury without knowing it.

What should I do when I get home?
Once you get home, you will not be able to feel much in the limb that had the nerve block. You need to take extra care not to injure yourself. **Reposition yourself often.** This will help prevent you from putting too much pressure on the area. You may need help doing this task.

- If the nerve block was in your leg, **do not put weight on your leg or foot** until the block wears off unless directed by your doctor. You may fall and break a bone, because your leg muscles will be weak. Even if you're using crutches, ask for help until the nerve block has worn off. If you're given a brace to wear, be sure to wear a brace as directed. It can help you from falling. Have someone help you to get in and out of bed and when walking to the bathroom.
- If the nerve block was in your arm, wear your sling as directed until the block wears off. If your doctor says you can take your arm out of the sling, be sure to support your arm with the other hand. Be careful not to sleep directly on the arm with the nerve block.

In the next 24-48 hours, you also need to check the area where the nerve block was placed. Check for redness, swelling, severe tenderness, or pus which can be signs of infection. If these signs are present, call the Home Pump Physician On-Call at the number below. It may be necessary have a doctor look at it.

What if I have pain at home?
The numbing medication may not relieve all the pain from your surgical procedure. It is OK to take pain medication even while the nerve block is working. There is NO interaction between the numbing medicine in the nerve block and the pain pills you were prescribed. Acetaminophen or anti-inflammatory medication like ibuprofen may be all that you need. If over the counter pain relievers are not enough, take your pain pills as prescribed by your doctor. Please carefully follow the instructions on your prescription.

When will the nerve block wear off?
The numbing medicine will begin to wear off about 6 to 24 hours after it was placed. You will notice a change in the way your limb feels – it may begin to feel less numb, less weak, and you may feel a tingly sensation as if it's "asleep." Once the numbing medicine begins to wear off, the nerve block is mostly gone within an hour, and the pain comes back very quickly. **Take your pain pills once you notice this change** since it takes about 30-45 minutes for the pills to take effect. It may take 1-4 hours for the nerve block to completely wear off.

What happens when the nerve block wears off?
When the nerve block wears off, your pain will likely increase. You may need to take more pain medication than when the nerve block was working. Often the nerve block can wear off in the middle of the night. So, even if you still have numbness tonight, we recommend taking your pain medication as prescribed by your doctor before going to bed.

I am still having some numbness even after 24 hours, is this normal?
It is somewhat common to still have some numbness after receiving a nerve block after 24 hours; however, it can be a sign of something more serious. If this is the case, call OHSU (503 494-8311) and ask for the On-Call Home Pump Physician. Also, contact your surgeon, as this could also be a problem related to your surgery/injury.

To learn more, please visit:
http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/health/services/anesthesiology/for-patients/home-pump.cfm

Call 503-494-8311 IMMEDIATELY
Ask for the On-Call Home-Pump Doctor
If you have:

- Signs of infection at the injection site (as described on Page 1)
- New Ringing/rumbling in your ear(s)
- Metallic taste or numbness in/around the mouth
- Dizziness, agitation, nervousness
- Hives
- Irregular breathing or heartbeat
- Shortness of breath or chest pain

IF YOUR SYMPTOMS ARE SEVERE, CALL 911