What is a peripheral nerve block?
It is when an anesthesiologist injects 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.

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. Therefore, you need to protect the numb area from injury.

- Unless directed by your doctor in the post-operative activity instructions, don’t use the 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.

To help you stay safe, you need a caregiver present 24 hours a day every day while your nerve block is working.

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 every hour. 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 it as directed. It can help you from falling. Have someone help you 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.

You also need to check the area where the nerve block catheter enters the skin four times a day, without removing the bandages. Check for redness, swelling, severe tenderness, or pus, which can be signs of infection. Call 503-494-8311 and ask for the “Home Pump Doctor On-Call” if you believe your catheter site is infected.

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 if you had a nerve block. Follow instructions in your after visit summary (AVS) regarding pain medication use.

What should I expect to feel while my nerve block is working?
Your pump is designed to deliver a continuous amount of numbing medicine over the course of 2-3 days. It is normal to experience an increase in pain 6-24 hours after the catheter is placed. This is because the numbing medicine that you are receiving through the pump is weaker than the numbing medicine initially used to place the nerve block. Sometimes the strong nerve block wears off in the middle of the night. Therefore, even if you still have numbness tonight, we recommend taking your pain medication as prescribed by your doctor before going to bed tonight.

**What happens when the nerve block wears off?**
Once the numbing medicine starts to wear off, 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 you notice sensation returning, the numbness is usually gone within an hour, and the pain can increase quickly. It is a good idea to **take your pain pill(s) once you notice sensation returning**, since it takes about 30-45 minutes for the pills to take effect. You may need to take more pain medication than when the nerve block was working. Contact your surgeon’s team if your prescription is not working well enough for you. It may take 1-4 hours for the nerve block to completely wear off.

**Can I take a bath with the nerve block catheter in place?**
**No.** The adhesive bandages that keep the nerve block catheter in place need to stay dry. If the bandages get wet, the catheter may fall out too soon. Therefore, you cannot take a bath. You may sponge bath, making sure to keep the catheter and all of the dressings dry.

**Fluid is leaking from the catheter, is something wrong?**
**No, this is normal.** It is common for fluid to leak from the catheter insertion site. This leakage is some of the numbing medicine tracking back along the catheter. Do your best to keep the site dry. You may use a towel or gauze to soak up any extra fluid.

**My catheter fell out, what do I do?**
Examine the catheter to make sure the end has a dark mark. If you **do not** see this dark stripe, save the tubing that has come out and call 503-494-8311 and ask for the “Home Pump Doctor On-Call.” If you see the dark stripe, you may remove the rest of your bandages and discard everything in the trash. You should start taking pain medication pills once the catheter is out to prevent getting behind on pain control.

**When does the catheter come out?**
After 3 days or once the medication in the pump is finished, whichever comes first. You may remove your catheter at any time before then, especially if told to do so by your doctor or if you no longer want or need your surgical site to feel numb. Regardless of medication status or your pain levels, you must remove the catheter once you reach the 3 day mark from the time of your discharge from the surgery center/hospital.

**How do I remove the catheter from my body?**
Removing a catheter is easy and painless. There are no stitches. It is easiest if another person removes it for you.
1. Wash your hands with soap and water.
2. Gently remove all dressings, adhesive tape, and sticky glue surrounding the catheter to expose the insertion site where the catheter enters the skin.
3. Grasp the tubing near your skin with two fingers and gently pull the catheter out.
4. The catheter should glide out VERY EASILY. **If you feel pain, resistance, or feel you need to use any force to pull the catheter out, STOP IMMEDIATELY.** Leave the tubing as is and call the on-call home pump doctor for further instruction.
5. About 2-3 inches of tubing will glide out of the skin before the tip of the catheter comes out. Carefully examine the tip of the catheter for a dark stripe (Figure 2) once the catheter is out. If
there is no dark stripe at the end, save the tubing that has come out in a plastic bag and call the on-call home pump doctor for further instruction. **DO NOT CUT THE TUBING.**

6. Once the tip is identified, dispose of all materials in the garbage (tubing, medication bag, dressings, etc.) You do not need to return any of the materials to OHSU.

**Where can I learn more information?**
To view 3 short informative videos about nerve blocks, how they are placed, and postoperative care, please search for **OHSU Home Pump** in your internet browser, or visit:

[http://tiny.cc/OHSUpump](http://tiny.cc/OHSUpump)

**What if I have questions at home?**
A healthcare provider will contact you the day after you go home to check on your progress if you go home with a nerve block catheter. For urgent conditions, including pain that is not well controlled, please call **503-494-8311** and ask for the “**Home-Pump Doctor On-Call.**” Most questions or problems can be handled over the phone. If you cannot reach the doctor on call by phone or are having an emergency, go to the nearest emergency room. If you are concerned about the surgical incision itself, please call your surgeon’s office.

**When should I call my doctor?**

**STOP THE PUMP**

**Call 503-494-8311 IMMEDIATELY**

**Ask for the Home-Pump Doctor On-Call**

**If you have:**

* Infection at the catheter site (see 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**
On-Q Home Pump: Quick Review

General Information
1. **Have a caregiver present.** You must have a caregiver present 24 hours a day throughout this treatment.
2. **A preset dose will be dispensed.** The pump will automatically deliver a preset dose through the catheter (plastic tube). Do not attempt to modify the dose rate.
3. **Oral pain medication.** You may take additional oral pain medication as instructed by your doctor.
   a. You may feel an increase in pain 6-24 hours after your pump is placed. This is normal. This is because the numbing medicine that you are receiving through the pump is weaker than the numbing medicine initially used to place the nerve block.
4. **Home Pump assistance after discharge.** The Home Pump Doctor will call you the day after you are discharged to evaluate your progress with the home pump. If you have questions or concerns or experience any difficulties, please call OHSU 24 hours a day at 503-494-8311 and ask for the “Home Pump Doctor On-Call.”

Instructions
1. **Do not get the pump wet.** Cover it with a plastic bag if necessary.
2. **Check the area** where the nerve block catheter enters the skin four times a day, without removing the bandages. Check for redness, swelling, severe tenderness, or pus which can be signs of infection.
3. **It is normal for the catheter site to leak.** The fluid may be clear or “red tinged.”
4. **Remove the catheter** when the pump is empty or when instructed by your home pump doctor. **Do not cut the catheter.** Follow the directions on page 2 of this document. **STOP** if you feel any resistance or pain and call OHSU 24 hours a day at 503-494-8311. Ask for the “Home Pump Doctor On-Call.”
5. **Throw away the pump** and catheter in your household trash, after checking for the dark stripe at the tip of the catheter (Fig 2).

Cautions
1. **Pressure injury.** Do not apply pressure to numb area. Do not sleep or lean on it. When you are awake, change positions at least once an hour. Keep the numbed area in a comfortable elevated position whenever possible. Symptoms of pressure injury include swelling of the area, paleness, increase in pain, and bruising or other color changes.
2. **Problems with weakness.** Please be careful when walking. If placed in your leg, the nerve block and numbing medicine may temporarily affect your ability to walk. Always ask your caregiver for help to prevent a fall. See your After Visit Summary for detailed activity instructions from your doctor.
3. **Drug toxicity.** TURN THE PUMP OFF by clamping the tube if you experience **ringing or rumbling in your ear(s), a metallic taste in your mouth, dizziness, shaking, irregular breathing, or an irregular heartbeat.** If your symptoms are severe, call 911 or have your caregiver drive you to the nearest emergency room. Ask the emergency personnel to contact OHSU at 503-494-8311 and ask for the “Home Pump Doctor On-Call.”