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.

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.

When will the nerve block wear off?
The numbing medicine will begin to wear off about 6 to 24 hours after the nerve block. 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.” It may take 1-4 hours for the nerve block to completely wear off.
**What happens when the nerve block wears off?**

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. Sometimes the 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.

**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 at 503-494-8311 and ask for the “Home Pump Doctor On-Call.” Also, contact your surgeon, as this could also be a problem related to your surgery/injury.

**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

**When should I call my doctor?**

**Call 503-494-8311 IMMEDIATELY**

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

**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**