

Going Home After an Upper Body Nerve Block

Checked below is the type of nerve block you had. Then the length of time the block lasts is noted next to it. The length of time the block will last varies between patients.

- Axillary** (8 – 24 hours)
- Interscalene** (12 – 24 hours)
- Supraclavicular** (12 – 24 hours)
- Infraclavicular** (12 – 24 hours)
- Bier or “IV local”** (During surgery and short-term post-op pain control)
- Paravertebral** (12 – 24 hours)

This block can be used to numb exact areas of the body. At the chest and abdomen level, it can be used for many types of breast, chest, and abdominal surgeries. At the level of the hip, it can be used for hip, knee, and front of the thigh surgeries. The anesthesiologist will meet with you before your surgery to discuss your block.

Protect your arm or hand from extreme heat or cold. Do not put any pressure on the arm or hand. Make sure you can always see your arm or hand. Keep your arm or hand raised on pillows. Sleep on your back with your head raised so you do not put pressure on your numb arm or hand. Do not smoke while you have numbness. While awake, you may use a sling while your arm or hand is clumsy until you have regained feeling and control.

Pain Medicine

If you have pain, you can start taking the oral pain medicine that your doctor has prescribed for you. Do not take extra Tylenol[®] (acetaminophen) if you are taking any of the medicines listed below.

- Vicodin[®]
- Norco[®]
- Percocet[®]
- Tylenol[®] #3

If you have not had any pain before going to bed, there is a chance that the numbness will wear off in the middle of the night. For this reason, you may take your pain medicine before going to bed. Be careful if you have severe sleep apnea. We suggest that you set your alarm for 4 – 6 hours to see if you need to take more pain medicine. The oral pain medicine will take 20 to 30 minutes to start working, so do not wait until you are in a lot of pain because it will be harder to get the pain under control.

Diet

For the rest of today, slowly start by drinking clear liquids such as water, apple juice, and soft drinks. If you feel okay, then try soup, soda crackers, and other foods that are easy to digest. Avoid spicy or fatty foods. Be sure to drink glasses of clear liquids often to avoid dehydration. Tomorrow, you can eat as you wish.

For the Next 24 Hours

Follow these guidelines even if you have no pain.

- Avoid strenuous activity.
- Do not drive or ride a bike.
- Do not run machinery or power tools.
- Do not drink alcohol or use drugs that have not been approved.
- Do not make any important decisions or sign important papers.
- Follow your doctor's advice about activity.
- Be careful when you sit or stand up. You may become dizzy if you sit or stand too quickly.
- Someone 16 or older should stay with you for the rest of the night.
- You may feel a little sleepy for the next 12 to 24 hours. Rest and relax for the next 12 hours.

When to Call

- A fever above 100°F (by mouth) or 99°F (under the arm) for 2 readings taken 4 hours apart.
- Trouble breathing or a “wet sounding” cough that does not go away.
- Frequent vomiting **after** getting settled at home (more than twice).
- Trouble passing urine by late tonight or you have a painful, full bladder.
- Prolonged numbness lasting longer than you were told to expect.
- **In an emergency, call 911.**

Who to Call

Your surgeon is Dr. _____
from the _____ Clinic.
The clinic phone number is _____.

Your anesthesiologist is Dr. _____

The toll-free number is **1-800-323-8942**.

After hours, weekends, and holidays, call **(608) 262-0486**. This is the paging operator. Ask for the doctor on call for Dr. _____. Leave your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back.

If you have questions or concerns about the nerve block, call **608-263-6400** and ask for the Anesthesia Acute Pain Service Resident on-call.

A nurse will try to call you at home or work within the next few days. We will ask a few questions about your recovery and the care you received. Let us know if this may be a problem.

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 6/2023 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#6834