

Anesthesia for Shoulder Surgery

This handout explains the types of anesthesia used for shoulder surgery. Talk with your surgeon and anesthesia doctor to choose the best pain relief for you.

Pre-Op Area

This is where you start your day. While here you:

- Talk about your health and anesthesia plan with your anesthesia doctor.
- Have an IV placed in the arm you are not having surgery on.
- Meet the block team. They help you decide if a nerve block is an option. They will place the nerve block for you.
- Meet the operating room (OR) nurses and the rest of your team.
- May get a medicine in your IV to help you relax.

A Nerve Block

Almost all patients having shoulder surgery have the option to get a single shot or nerve block catheter. They numb the nerves in your neck that bring feeling to your shoulder and arm.

Steps for Getting a Block

The team watches you closely for safety. We will choose the best type of block for you. Two different systems may be used to help place your block.

- Ultrasound
- Nerve stimulation

With nerve stimulation, your arm will “jump”. This is normal. Your arm may start to get numb before you go to the OR. The steps we take to place a block include:

- Confirm your name, birthday, surgery, planned nerve block and allergies.
- Position you for your block.
- Give you medicine to make you relax, if needed.

The Operating Room (OR)

This is where you will have surgery. When in the OR, you:

1. Move onto a bed and have monitors placed.
2. Confirm your name, birthday, surgery, and allergies with the team.
3. Take deep breaths of oxygen and get IV medicine that makes you sleepy.
4. Have a breathing tube put in after you fall asleep.
5. Lie on your side or sit. Your arm, neck, and legs will be well supported and cushioned.
6. Wake up when surgery is over and have the breathing tube pulled out. You may not remember anything until you go to the recovery room.
7. Have a nurse who takes care of you when you get to the recovery room.

Comparing General Anesthesia, Nerve Block, & Nerve Catheter

	General Anesthesia	Single Injection Nerve Block	Nerve Catheter
How is it given?	A medicine given through an IV	A one-time shot	A very small tube left in place
Time it takes to place		5 – 10 minutes	20 – 30 minutes
How long does it control pain?	Monitored during surgery	12 – 15 hours	Gives medicine nonstop for 48 – 72 hours
What you need to do	Nothing	Nothing	You remove the tube at home.
Equipment	A breathing tube	None	You go home with a small pump that gives you numbing medicine.
How it is placed		Ultrasound and nerve stimulation	Ultrasound and nerve stimulation.
Benefits	You are fully asleep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less pain with rest and activity • Improved sleep • Less nausea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less pain with rest and activity • Improved sleep • Less nausea
Risks/Possible Side Effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sore throat • Nausea • Groggy after waking up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nerve damage • Bleeding • Infection • Breathing problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nerve damage • Bleeding • Infection (slightly higher risk but still low) • Not an option if you take a blood thinner • Breathing problems

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 © 10/2023 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7113