



## ***Foot and Ankle Surgery Peripheral Nerve Block***

**FOR YOUR FOOT AND ANKLE SURGERY**, your surgeon has requested that you have a nerve block, a procedure to help decrease your post-operative pain. This is an elective procedure which you can choose to decline. This brochure will help you to make an educated choice, which you can discuss in more detail with your Anesthesiologist on the day of your surgery.

### ***What is a Nerve Block?***

It is an injection of local anesthetic near the nerve(s) which supply sensation and muscle control of the area(s) of your operation. This makes the area(s) feel numb and weak. It is primarily for postoperative pain relief and is usually combined with general anesthesia for your procedure. Depending on the type of surgery you are having, you may be offered a Nerve Block Catheter which provides even longer lasting pain relief. (See below)

### ***What are the benefits of the Nerve Block?***

The amount of general anesthetic medication and pain medication that you require during and after surgery are less than if you did not have the nerve block. This could lead to decreased side-effects from these medications, such as nausea and vomiting, sedation and constipation. Blocks can help to decrease the stress your body undergoes during surgery. In addition, you may have increased mobility more quickly, a shorter recovery period and better pain relief.

### ***What are the risks of the Nerve Block?***

Serious complications of a nerve block are rare. Any questions you may have can be discussed in depth with your anesthesiologist. There are four main risks to the nerve block (both the one-time injection and the catheter). These risks are similar to the risks associated with your surgery. They include infection, bleeding, toxicity from the local anesthetic injection and nerve injury.

Bleeding can occur because a needle is used to place the nerve block (both the one-time injection and the catheter).

The risk of infection occurs because the anesthesiologist goes through your skin (your body's natural barrier to infection) with a needle. The anesthesiologist uses sterile techniques during the placement of the nerve block.

Local anesthetic toxicity can occur if the medication is injected in the wrong location. Nerve damage is a rare complication of nerve blocks. Nerve damage, if it occurs, is usually temporary and most patients make a full recovery in days to weeks. Permanent damage can occur, but it is extremely rare.

Nerve damage can also occur from the tourniquet placed on your leg during surgery, from positioning during your surgery or from direct surgical injury. These causes are also very rare and your surgeon can discuss them with you.

Nerve damage is also more likely if you have a pre-existing condition such as diabetes.

(CONTINUED ON REVERSE)

## What is a Nerve Block Catheter?

In certain surgical cases, your anesthesiologist will weigh the benefits and risks to decide if you may benefit from a nerve block catheter. This is a small tube that is placed next to the nerve that supplies sensation and muscle control of the area of your surgery. It delivers numbing medicine to help control your post-operative pain.

We, the Anesthesiologists of Spectrum Medical Group, are committed to providing patient-focused, state-of-the-art perioperative care each and every day.

## Leg or Foot Nerve Block Discharge Instructions

THE FOLLOWING NERVE BLOCK WAS PERFORMED FOR YOUR SURGERY:

YOUR NERVE BLOCK WAS PERFORMED BY:

IT SHOULD LAST FOR ABOUT \_\_\_\_\_ HOURS.  
FOLLOW YOUR SURGEON'S INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING ELEVATION  
AND ICE. THIS IS IMPORTANT TO DECREASE SWELLING.

### Pain Medications:

- Fill your prescriptions at a pharmacy.
- Begin taking scheduled medications as scheduled, even if you don't have pain. It is important to treat the pain before it becomes severe.
- Take your pain medicine with food to help avoid nausea.
- Set an alarm at bedtime so that you can wake up and take your medications on schedule.

### Safety:

You may lose all feeling and control of movement in the leg in which the nerve block was given. You can injure yourself and not know it. Protect it by doing the following:

- Keep the leg away from things too hot, cold, sharp or tight.
- Check frequently for swelling, redness or blue color.
- While you are awake, change positions often to relieve pressure.
- While sleeping, pad your leg with pillows to avoid rolling on it and to relieve pressure.

### Leg:

Your leg and foot will not be able to support weight until the nerve block medication wears off.

- Use crutches, a walker, or a knee scooter according to your surgeon's instructions.
- Do not put weight on your leg and foot.
- Do not climb stairs without help.

### Side Effects:

Expected effects of the nerve block are numbness and weakness in the leg. These should resolve as the nerve block medication wears off. If you have persistent weakness or numbness, please contact the Department of Anesthesiology by calling 207-482-7800. If you feel this is a life threatening emergency or requires immediate medical attention, contact 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

324 Gannett Drive, Suite 200, South Portland, Maine 04106

T: (207)482-7800 • F: (207)482-7898

[www.spectrummedicalgroup.com](http://www.spectrummedicalgroup.com)

