

When Do I Need to Seek Medical Attention After Discharge?

Seek medical attention if you do not feel well, or experience any of the following:

- Difficulty in breathing after an upper limb block
- Severe headache or backache after spinal/epidural anaesthesia
- Persistent numbness or weakness in the arms and/or legs

Please note that the abovementioned guidelines are not exhaustive.

If you experience any of the above, please call us at 6357 1444 during office hours*, or seek treatment at the Emergency Department, Basement 1, Tan Tock Seng Hospital after office hours.

*Office hours:

Monday - Friday: 8am - 5pm

Saturday: 8am - 12noon

Sunday & Public Holiday: Closed

Department of NURSING

Advice After Day Surgery Under Regional Anaesthesia



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These instructions provide general information and advice on coping with the effects of regional anaesthesia after day surgery. Taking these precautions may help to reduce risks and complications.

What is Regional Anaesthesia?

Anaesthesia is a state of loss of sensation on a temporary basis. In regional anaesthesia, the anaesthetist gives an injection to administer drugs to block the nerve supply to the part of the body to be operated on. In this way, the patient will not feel pain in the area during the surgery. Besides the loss of sensation, there may also be some inability to move the affected part of the body. Depending on the drugs used, these effects usually last up to 2-6 hours.

What is Spinal/Epidural Anaesthesia?

Spinal and epidural anaesthesia are two of the most commonly performed regional anaesthesia techniques. They involve administering drugs in the patient's back to temporarily numb the lower part of the body. They are very safe and effective.

What are Some Common Surgery Types That Involve the use of Regional Anaesthesia?

- Eye surgery, e.g. cataract surgery
- Surgery on the hand or arm
- Surgery on the legs
- Surgery on the trunk/torso
- Surgery of the prostate gland

What are Some Benefits of Regional Anaesthesia?

Using regional anaesthesia is helpful in avoiding some of the common unpleasant side effects of general anaesthesia such as drowsiness, giddiness, headache and nausea or vomiting. Regional anaesthesia can also provide pain relief for several hours after the surgery.

What are the Potential Side Effects or Complications?

These procedures are safe when performed by trained doctors. The complications depend on the type of regional anaesthesia used.

Serious but rare complications include nerve injury, infection or bleeding near the site of injection resulting in nerve compression. However, these complications can be detected and are usually treated without lasting problems. Long-term complications resulting in permanent nerve damage are rare.

With spinal or epidural anaesthesia, severe headaches may occur in the post-operative period. However, this is rare and can be treated with painkillers, bed rest and adequate liquids to drink. Medical attention is advised.

What Should I Take Note After the Surgery?

Regional anaesthesia is associated with temporary loss of sensation, weakness or paralysis to the part of the body that is undergoing surgery. The duration of these effects usually varies from 2 to 6 hours depending on the drugs and the type of regional anaesthesia used.

Sensation and strength will return gradually. As sensation returns, you may feel pain at the part of the body that has undergone surgery. Medication for pain, as prescribed by your doctor, should be taken to reduce the effects of pain.

Our nurses/doctors will educate you on the care needed to protect the area after surgery until the sensation and strength returns to normal.

For example, with regional anaesthesia of the lower half of the body, there is temporary loss of sensation and weakness of the legs. Hence, please be careful before standing and walking to prevent falling. You should only stand with supervision when sensation to your feet returns. For patients who have received spinal anaesthesia, this should only be attempted after 6 hours. Walking with assistance can begin when strength in the legs has returned to normal. Occasionally, there may be difficulty passing urine temporarily.