

If you have questions or concerns, please ask your physician or nurse.

Going Home After a Lower Extremity Nerve Block (Foot, Ankle, Leg)

Your physician has recommended a nerve block as anesthesia for your surgery. A nerve block is a shot of numbing medication that prevents you from feeling any pain at the site of surgery. This brochure explains what to expect and how to care for yourself after you leave the hospital. Carefully follow any instructions your surgeon, anesthesiologist and nurse give you.

Procedure

Your care team may give you the nerve block before or after your surgery. You will lose all feeling and movement in the leg where you have the surgery. This may last 24 to 48 hours, depending on the type of block your care team uses.

Going home

Protect your foot or leg

The block may affect the way you sense your foot or leg's position and location. You may feel like you are not sure where or how it is placed or positioned.

During this time, it is important to protect your toes, feet and legs from injury.

- You will not be able to control foot or leg movement until the nerve block wears off.
- You will not be able to tell if your leg is twisted or if anything is pushing against it.

Protect your foot and leg from hot and cold temperatures. Your sense of hot and cold is also dulled until the block wears off.

If you had surgery on your knee or upper leg:

The care team may give you a cooling unit for that area. The cooling unit helps relieve pain and swelling. Carefully follow the cooling unit guidelines.

Prevent falls

Your foot or leg may feel different or heavier. **This can affect your balance and increase your risk of falling.**

Until the block completely wears off, and all feeling and movement is completely back to normal, be extra careful to avoid a fall.

Have someone with you at home after your surgery.

Do not try to stand or put weight on your leg until the numbness wears off completely **and** until your surgeon tells you it is safe to do so. Follow your surgeon's activity instructions to help you recover and heal.

Activity

Use crutches to stand up or walk.

If you must use stairs, be careful.

- Climb up and down stairs in the sitting position.
- When climbing up stairs, face backward (toward the bottom of the stairs) while sitting and go up backwards, 1 step at a time.
- When going down, sit facing forward, then slide down, step by step, with your good leg.

Stay comfortable

- Begin to take your pain medication as soon as you notice the block starting to wear off and you start to feel some discomfort or pain. Then, take the medication on the schedule prescribed by your physician, as needed for pain.
- **Do not wait to feel severe pain.** It is easier to prevent the build-up of pain than to try to stop it once it is there.
- Contact your surgeon about any severe pain that is not being managed by your medication.

Contact information

Call the anesthesiologist 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, at 312.695.7039 if you have any questions about your anesthesia care.