

# Peripheral Nerve Block for Pain Control after Surgery: *Home Instructions*

## What is it and why do I need it?

A **peripheral nerve block** is a way to “turn off” pain signals in a specific area of your body, such as your knee, leg, shoulder, or arm. It’s used to prevent pain during surgery and as you heal afterward. After surgery, the nerve block can reduce your need for other pain medications that have more side effects.

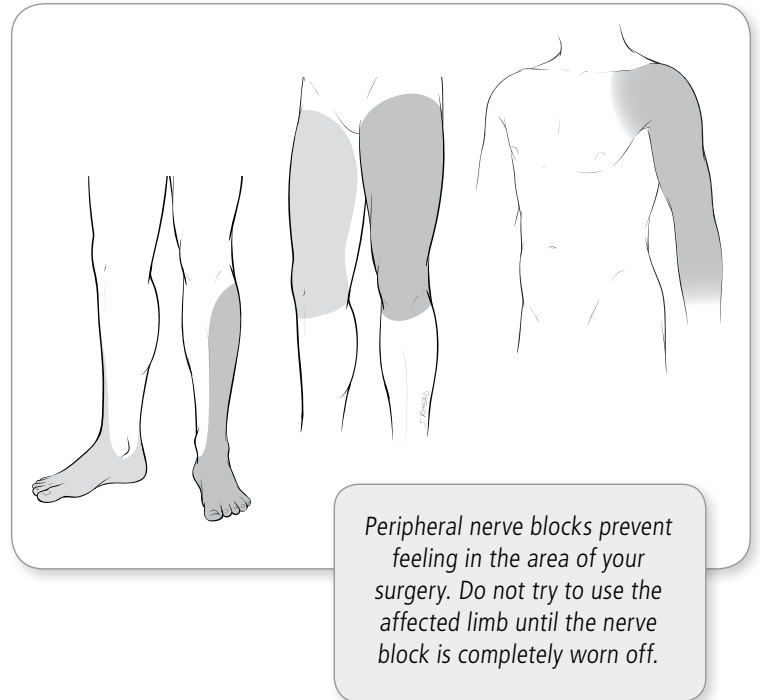
**While your nerve block is in effect, you need to be extra careful.** You won’t be able to feel much in the area that’s blocked, so you need to protect yourself from injury. This fact sheet will help you know what to do.

## When will the nerve block wear off?

How soon your nerve block will wear off depends on how it was given.

- **If you had an injection,** it will wear off anywhere from 3 to 36 hours after it was given. Your doctor can be more specific. Be sure to ask.
- **If you are going home with the catheter in place,** it will be attached to a small pump called an LAID (local anesthetic infusion device). Your doctor or nurse will tell you when to remove it, and the nerve block will wear off shortly after that.

Your nurse will give you more information about how to care for the pump. You may want to ask your nurse for the Intermountain Fact sheet called *LAID: Home Instructions*.



## What should I watch out for?

You won’t be able to feel pain, pressure, or extreme temperatures until the block wears off.

- **Don’t try to use the affected limb** until the block wears off. It will be too weak.
- **Don’t let anything bump into it or rest on it.** You won’t be able to feel if you’re injured or there’s too much pressure.
- **Be extra careful about extreme temperatures.** You may not be able to feel pain, pressure, or temperatures. You could get injured without knowing it.

## What should I do when I get home?

Once you get home, you still may not be able to feel much in the limb that had the nerve block. You need to take extra care not to injure yourself.

- **Reposition yourself often.** While resting, reposition yourself from time to time. This will help prevent you from putting too much pressure on the area. You may need help doing this.

### If the block was in your leg,

- **DO NOT put weight on your leg or foot** until the block wears off, unless directed by your healthcare providers. You are more likely to fall. Even if you're using crutches, ask for help until the nerve block has worn off.
- **If you are given a brace to wear,** be sure to wear it as directed. It can help prevent you from falling.
- **Have someone help you** getting in and out of bed and walking to the bathroom.

### If the block was in your arm,

- **Wear your sling as directed** until the block wears off. If your doctor says you can take your arm out of the sling, be sure to support your arm with the other hand.
- **Be careful not to sleep on the arm with the block.**

## What happens when it wears off?

Here's what you can expect as the nerve block wears off:

- The weakness may wear off first.
- You may feel a tingling and heaviness in the area, as if it is "asleep."
- Once it starts to wear off, the nerve block is usually completely gone within an hour. **Start taking your oral pain medication before the nerve block is completely gone.**

## Follow-up appointment

Ask your doctor when you should return for a follow-up appointment. Write the date and time here:

---

## When should I call my doctor?

Call your doctor right away if you experience any of the following:

- Severe or ongoing shortness of breath
- Prolonged weakness in the affected limb
- Pain that is not controlled with the pain medication

**If you have a catheter with an LAID,** watch out for the signs below. Contact your doctor immediately if you have:

- Signs of infection, such as redness, swelling, or fever
- Numbness around your lips or tongue
- Difficulty breathing
- Dizziness
- Blurred vision
- Ringing in your ears
- Hearing loss
- Metallic taste in your mouth
- Uncontrollable shaking
- Seizure (call 911 or have someone take you to the Emergency Room)