



Hunter Canal Block

- i** Important information for patients undergoing a Hunter Canal Block.

About this booklet

The purpose of this booklet is to provide information about what to expect when you have an operation using a Hunter Canal Block technique. This includes explaining what a Hunter Canal Block technique is, the potential benefits of using this technique for your operation, and any risks which may be associated with this.

If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to any member of your health care team.

Introduction

You have been scheduled to have knee surgery at the Golden Jubilee National Hospital. To help you cope with the pain associated with the recovery from this procedure, the anaesthetic team may offer you a form of regional anaesthesia called a Hunter Canal Block.

What is a Hunter Canal Block?

Your femoral nerve is one of the main nerves which transmits pain signals from the knee joint. The Hunter Canal Block stops these signals, providing pain relief to your knee for up to 12 hours after surgery. This technique is used alongside a spinal or general anaesthetic.

The anaesthetist will use an ultrasound machine to locate your femoral nerve and inject local anaesthetic in a compartment known as the Hunter Canal.

This block may be performed before or after you are given spinal or general anaesthetic.



Why have a Hunter Canal Block?

There are several potential advantages to receiving a Hunter Canal Block:

1. immediate pain relief after surgery;
2. less need for strong pain relieving drugs;
3. less pain relieving medication required when compared to general or spinal anaesthetic alone;
4. less sickness and vomiting;
5. earlier return to eating and drinking normally following surgery;
6. less drowsiness;
7. shorter recovery period; and
8. potentially earlier mobilisation.

Can everyone have a Hunter Canal Block?

As a Hunter Canal Block is a regional anaesthetic, this may not be suitable for all patients (it may not be possible if it is decided there is a significant risk of complications). Your anaesthetist will ask if you:

- are taking blood thinning drugs, such as Warfarin;
- have a blood clotting abnormality or condition;
- have an allergy to local anaesthetics; and
- have had any previous problems with the nerves in your legs.

What are the risks and side effects of Hunter Canal Block?

As with any procedure, there are some risks associated with Hunter Canal Blocks, but serious complications are very uncommon. Some potential complications are listed in the following table.

People vary in how they interpret words and numbers.

This scale is provided to help.



Very common

1 in 10
Someone in
your family



Common

1 in 100
Someone in
a street



Uncommon

1 in 1,000
Someone in
a village



Rare

1 in 10,000
Someone in
a small town



Very rare

1 in 100,000
Someone in
a large town

Common side effects:

Numbness and muscle weakness of your operated foot	This side effect should disappear when the local anaesthetic wears off.
Pain during the injection	If you feel any pain or pins and needles when a local anaesthetic is being injected, you should inform your anaesthetist immediately. This could be an indication of irritation or damage to a nerve, requiring the needle to be repositioned.
Bruising at injection site	This usually settles down within a few days.

Rare and very rare complications:

Failure of the nerve block	In the unlikely event that the nerve block fails, a different form of pain relief will be given to you.
Infection	Having an infection at the local anaesthetic injection site is rare. The anaesthetist will perform the block using safe practice techniques to ensure this risk is kept to a minimum.
Allergic reaction to local anaesthetic	This is very rare and can present as skin reactions such as hive, rash, itching, and breathing difficulties. If this happens, your anaesthetist will start the appropriate treatment and management.

Systemic toxicity (high levels of local anaesthetic in blood)	This rare complication can occur if local anaesthetic is accidentally injected or absorbed into the blood vessels around the nerve. This can cause loss of consciousness and severe depression of heart function.
Bruising to the nerves	This may cause discomfort and pain, which usually settles within a few weeks.
Nerve damage	This is a rare complication of any nerve block. Some patients experience temporary loss of sensation, pins and needles and sometimes muscle weakness may last for a few days or even weeks, but almost all individuals make a full recovery. Permanent nerve damage is even rarer, (estimated at around 1:2000 to 1:5000). Nerve damage can also result from the surgical procedure itself.

Further information

For more information about Hunter Canal Block and regional anaesthesia, please speak to your anaesthetist or contact the Anaesthetic Department of the Golden Jubilee National Hospital by calling 0141 951 5600.

Further support and advice is available from:

- The Royal College of Anaesthetists – responsible for standards in anaesthesia, critical care and pain management throughout the UK. www.rcoa.ac.uk
- The Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland www.aagbi.org

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