

Patient Information Leaflet

## Anaesthesia and Pain Relief for Your Shoulder Operation

**Produced By:**

The Department of Anaesthesia

May 2014  
Review due May 2017



**If you require this leaflet in another language, large print or another format, please contact the Quality Team, telephone 01983 534850, who will advise you.**

### **Introduction**

Making sure that you are safe and pain free throughout your shoulder operation is a service that your anaesthetist will provide and discuss with you prior to your surgery.

Post-operative and sometimes even pre-operative pain relief is also something that your anaesthetist can and will provide for you.

We know from experience that shoulder surgery requires good planning and active pain management to avoid problems, but in almost all cases you and your anaesthetist can work out a regime that will provide excellent pain relief before, during and after your operation.

Your anaesthetist can discuss all of the available options with you and one method that has proven to be very effective, safe and with very few side effects, is an **interscalene nerve block**.

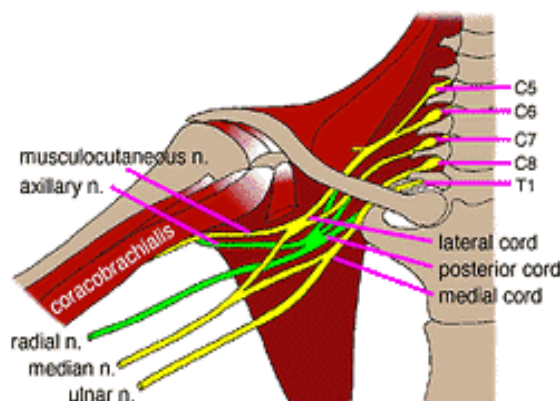
The purpose of this information leaflet is to explain about this block before you meet your anaesthetist in hospital.

### **What is an Interscalene Nerve Block?**

A special stimulating needle is inserted into the neck to locate the correct nerves. An ultrasound machine may also be used to help locate these nerves and then a local anaesthetic is injected which numbs the nerves that go to the shoulder and arm. It may be used on its own, as the sole anaesthetic, or you may receive sedation or a general anaesthetic as well.

You can find out more about these choices in the booklet 'Anaesthesia Explained' which you can find on the Royal College of Anaesthetists website ([www.rcoa.ac.uk](http://www.rcoa.ac.uk)).

Having talked with your anaesthetist about the benefits, risks and your preferences, you can decide together whether you would like a nerve block



### **How long does the block last?**

An interscalene nerve block can give pain relief for 2 to 24 hours depending on the site and on the drugs used. Sometimes a catheter (a very thin tube) can be passed through the needle

and left in place. More local anaesthetic can then be given for a longer period—perhaps up to a few days.

### **Benefits:**

Benefits of an interscalene nerve block may include a shorter recovery period, and better pain relief after your operation. This allows you to be mobile more quickly after your operation. You may not need as many strong pain relieving medicines such as morphine as often. This will help reduce your risk of the side effects associated with these medicines, which include nausea (feeling sick) and drowsiness.

### **What will it be like?**

The Interscalene nerve block is intended to help reduce your pain following surgery to your shoulder. All pain from the procedure may not be completely relieved by this technique and therefore you will probably have additional pain medication to take, by mouth, to provide extra pain relief as needed. Please take these oral pain medications as instructed.

The local anaesthetic medication in the nerve block will produce some degree of numbness in your arm, shoulder and hand, often patients can not feel them at all. Therefore you must be aware that the arm and shoulder may be injured without you feeling pain from the injury. Please carefully protect the arm and shoulder carefully from any possible injury, including heat, pressure, chemicals, or other objects.

You will probably have some degree of muscle weakness in the arm and shoulder from the effect of the local anaesthetic. Do not try to support yourself or bear weight on the arm or hand while the local anaesthetic nerve block is working.

As well as making your arm heavy and numb, the local anaesthetic may cause your eyelid to droop on the same side as the operation and you may get a hoarse voice, and occasionally a feeling of not being able to take a deep breath. This may last the duration of the anaesthetic block.

The feeling in your shoulder and arm should return after 12 to 24 hours. If your arm still feels numb after 48 hours do not worry, this sometimes happens, just give the **Emergency Department** a call on:

**Tel: 01983 53466**

Valuables should not be brought into the hospital. If patients have to bring in valuable items they should ask a nurse to store them safely and request a receipt for the items. You may not be able to have the valuable items returned if the time of discharge from hospital is out of hours.

We are sorry but the Trust cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage to items not given for safe keeping.

You can get further information on all sorts of health issues online at: <http://www.nhs.uk/>

For Health advice and out of hours GP service please call the NHS 111 service on: 111

**We Value Your Views On Our Service**

If you wish to comment on the care which you, your relative or friend has received, we will be pleased to hear from you. Please speak to the person in charge of the ward, clinic or service in the first instance or ask them to contact the Quality Team. If you wish to contact them directly, telephone on 534850.

Alternatively you may prefer to write to:

Chief Executive  
Isle Of Wight NHS Trust  
St Mary's Hospital  
Newport  
Isle of Wight  
PO30 5TG

You can also share any concerns you have about our services with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) on 03000 61 61 61 or at [enquiries@cqc.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@cqc.org.uk)

All NHS sites are no smoking areas.

If you would like help and advice to stop smoking please call: Freephone 0800 169 0 169 to talk to the NHS Smoking Helpline.

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