

SPINAL ANAESTHETIC FOR HIPJOINT REPLACEMENT

ANAESTHETIST: DR. JOHN CORMACK

One of the major challenges of anaesthesia for these operations is to provide adequate pain control in the post operative period.

Because you may be admitted to hospital a short time before the start of the operating list I have provided some information for you to read beforehand.

Be aware that I will discuss with you all details pertaining to your anaesthetic when you are in hospital and that the best form of pain relief may differ from person to person depending on things such as allergies or past reactions.

Spinal Anaesthetic:

Total hip joint replacement can be performed under a spinal anaesthetic alone, or in **combination** with a light general anaesthetic. Many patients prefer to be asleep during the operation as it is rather long and noisy. For most people a light general anaesthetic carries little or no extra risk and wears off very quickly.

The spinal block causes temporary numbness of the legs and this can be prolonged in the upper thigh with a nerve block to improve pain relief post operatively. Using a long acting numbing nerve block helps to decrease the amount of strong pain killers required which often tend to make people feel drowsy and sick. I will discuss more with you before the operation.

Mixing medications

Once you are able to drink, if you have any pain, you will be given pain relieving tablets as needed which can complement the block's effects.

Risks versus benefits of spinal anaesthesia:

As with any medical procedure there is a risk of complications. In the case of spinals the risks are small and this is why they have been in use for over a century.

The main risk is of pain when the block wears off and supplemental pain relievers are needed in most patients. Annoying but short lived complications can include bruising and headache but these are infrequent. The most serious risk is of long lasting numbness or weakness in the legs which is extremely rare.

The benefits are well established. The pain relief is superior to morphine allowing quick recovery from surgery and decreased nausea and vomiting. Spinals are also associated with decreased blood loss from the surgery and increased protection from deep vein thrombosis.