

MAJOR SHOULDER AND MAJOR KNEE SURGERY

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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 before your admission.

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.

Nerve Blocks:

Shoulder operations and knee reconstructions or replacements are usually performed under general anaesthetic. In addition, it is possible to perform a nerve block near the nerves carrying sensation from the affected limb thereby causing numbness. This is a similar process to a dentist numbing your mouth with a needle before a filling. By using a long acting numbing drug or infusion this pain relief can last many hours past the end of the operation and help decrease the amount of strong pain killers which often tend to make people feel drowsy and sick. I will discuss more with you about the pros and cons of these blocks before the operation.

Mixing medications

Once you are able to drink, your nurses will also provide you with tablets on a regular basis. Research has proven that by using the local anaesthetic infusion and tablets at the same time, you will be more comfortable than with each on their own.

Risks versus benefits of nerve blocks:

As with any medical procedure there is a risk of complications. In the case of nerve blocks the risks are small and this is why they have been used consistently for over a century.

The main risk is that the block may not entirely cover your pain and supplemental pain killers are needed in about 10% of patients. The most serious risk is of long lasting numbness or weakness in an arm or leg but this is extremely rare.

The benefits are well established. Better recovery from surgery and quicker rehabilitation, decreased nausea and vomiting and improved patient satisfaction are just a few.