

# Regional Anesthesia, Adult



Regional anesthesia is the use of medicine to numb a certain area of your body for a period of time. You may receive it before a procedure. A health care provider who is an expert in giving anesthesia (anesthesiologist) injects the medicine near a nerve or a group of nerves. You may also get regional anesthesia through a flexible tube (catheter). This makes that area of the body numb. Regional anesthesia allows you to be awake during the procedure but keeps you from feeling pain.

Regional anesthesia has some benefits over general anesthesia, which is when you are put to sleep for the procedure. These include:

- Better pain control after your surgery.
- Less nausea, vomiting, or drowsiness.
- Faster recovery time.

## **Tell a health care provider about:**

- Any allergies you have.
- All medicines you are taking, including vitamins, herbs, eye drops, creams, and over-the-counter medicines.
- Any problems you or family members have had with anesthesia.
- Any bleeding problems you have.
- Any surgeries you have had.
- Any medical conditions you have or have had.
- Whether you are pregnant or may be pregnant.
- Any use of drugs, alcohol, or tobacco.

## **What are the risks?**

Your health care provider will talk with you about risks. These may include:

- Headache.
- Severe nausea or vomiting.
- Low blood pressure.
- Nerve damage.
- Infection or bleeding around the injection site.
- Trouble urinating.
- Allergic reactions to medicine.

## **What happens before the procedure?**

### **When to stop eating and drinking**



Follow instructions from your health care provider about what you may eat and drink. These may include:

- 8 hours before your procedure
  - Stop eating most foods. **Do not** eat meat, fried foods, or fatty foods.
  - Eat only light foods, such as toast or crackers.
  - All liquids are okay except energy drinks and alcohol.
- 6 hours before your procedure
  - Stop eating.
  - Drink only clear liquids, such as water, clear fruit juice, black coffee, plain tea, and sports drinks.
  - **Do not** drink energy drinks or alcohol.
- 2 hours before your procedure
  - Stop drinking all liquids.
  - You may be allowed to take medicines with small sips of water.

If you do not follow your health care provider's instructions, your procedure may be delayed or canceled.

## Medicines

Ask your health care provider about:

- Changing or stopping your regular medicines. These include any diabetes medicines or blood thinners you take.
- Taking medicines such as aspirin and ibuprofen. These medicines can thin your blood. **Do not** take them unless your health care provider tells you to.
- Taking over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, herbs, and supplements.

## Tests

- You may have an exam or testing.
- You may have a blood or urine sample taken.

## General instructions

- **Do not** use any products that contain nicotine or tobacco for at least 4 weeks before the procedure. These products include cigarettes, chewing tobacco, and vaping devices, such as e-cigarettes. If you need help quitting, ask your health care provider.
- If you use a sleep apnea device, ask your health care provider whether you should bring it with you on the day of your surgery.
- If you will be going home right after the procedure, plan to have a responsible adult:
  - Take you home from the hospital or clinic. You will not be allowed to drive.
  - Care for you for the time you are told.

## What happens during the procedure?

- An IV may be inserted into one of your veins.
- You may be given:
  - A sedative. This helps you relax.
  - Local anesthesia. This will numb the injection area.
- The health care provider will do a physical exam to find the best place to give the regional anesthesia. They may also use:
  - A nerve stimulator. This is a device that activates the nerve and makes your muscles twitch.
  - Ultrasound.
- The health care provider will give you an injection of a type of regional anesthesia. You may also get it through a catheter. You may get:
  - Spinal anesthesia. This medicine is injected once into the fluid around your spinal cord. It numbs the area below and just above the injection site.
  - Epidural anesthesia. This medicine may be placed into your back, just outside of the protective tissue that covers your spinal cord.
  - Peripheral nerve block. This is an injection given in an area of the body other than the spine to block all feeling below the injection site.
- The health care provider will check to make sure the medicine is working before and during your procedure.
- A small bandage (dressing) may be placed over the injection site.

The procedure may vary among health care providers and hospitals.

## **What happens after the procedure?**

- Your blood pressure, heart rate, breathing rate, and blood oxygen level will be monitored until you leave the hospital or clinic.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.