



Supraclavicular Blocks for Shoulder, Arm, or Hand Surgery

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is a supraclavicular block?

A Supraclavicular Block (SB) numbs the shoulder, arm, and hand for surgery. Your anesthesia provider will do this procedure before surgery. It may provide anesthesia for the surgery itself, or be given with general anesthesia. Either way, you will have LESS PAIN and require less medication with fewer side effects!

How is an SB performed?

With you lying on your back, your provider will perform an ultrasound of the neck to find the nerves which supply your shoulder, arm, and hand. A local anesthetic (numbing medicine) will be injected in this area. For some surgeries, a small catheter will then be placed and taped to your neck. (This is called a **Continuous Supraclavicular Block**, or **CSB**.) This catheter will deliver a continuous infusion of local anesthetic. The procedure takes about 15 to 30 minutes.

How long will the SB give me pain relief?

Single injections last about 8 to 16 hours. Consider taking pain medication at bedtime, so that you are likely to have a comfortable night's sleep as the SB wears off. For CSBs, catheters usually stay in place and provide relief for 4 days. Once the catheter is removed, it will take several hours for the numbness and weakness to wear off. This is completely normal and expected.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have any questions, please ask your physician. If you have questions or need more information about the medications mentioned above, please speak to your pharmacist.

© 2012, The Permanente Medical Group. All rights reserved.
Department of Anesthesia.

Department of Anesthesia/East Bay

Is there anything I shouldn't do after an SB?

Your shoulder, arm, and fingers will be numb and weak after an SB. Do NOT remove the sling if provided, use the arm, or operate a motorized vehicle until cleared to do so by your surgeon or physical therapist.

Are there any risks or side effects?

SBs are very safe. Side effects include a hoarse voice, drooping eyelid, small pupil, and/or nasal stuffiness on the side of your SB. These are temporary and last only as long as the SB. All procedures are done using sterile technique and ultrasound guidance to reduce the risk of bleeding, infection, lung puncture, and nerve injury. Nerve injury is rare, and can be temporary or permanent, causing numbness, weakness, or burning pain. Talk to your anesthesia provider if you have specific concerns.

What if I have questions after my SB?

During your hospital stay, you will be seen by an anesthesia provider every day if you have a catheter in place. After discharge, you may call the KP Oakland Anesthesia Department at 510-752-6238 on weekdays, during regular business hours. For urgent concerns, call 510-752-1000 and ask for the anesthesiologist on call. If you are discharged with a nerve catheter, please read the handout, **Continuous Supraclavicular Blocks — Discharge Instructions and Frequently Asked Questions**.