

# Peripheral Nerve Catheter Discharge Instructions

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## What is a peripheral nerve catheter?

A **peripheral nerve catheter** is a device used to relieve pain at the site of surgery. It is put in place by an **anesthesiologist**, a medical doctor who specializes in giving drugs to control pain before, during, and after surgery. The anesthesiologist will place a small, hollow plastic tube (**catheter**) under the skin next to the nerves that provide feeling to the area of your body where you're having surgery. This will be done before you go into the operating room.

## How much pain relief should I expect?

The goal is for the peripheral nerve catheter to reduce your pain from surgery. Some patients' pain control is better than expected, and some is worse. The team will make every effort to manage your pain after surgery, including prescribing other types of pain medication for you to take by mouth as needed.

## What medicine will I be getting through the catheter?

The catheter will be used to continuously give **local anesthetic** (numbing medicine delivered to a specific area of the body). The anesthetic will cause some numbness in the area of surgery and reduce your pain. This medicine is not a **narcotic** (a pain-relieving medication with strong side effects and a risk of dependence).

## How does the catheter and pump device work?

The catheter is connected to a pump with a local anesthetic inside of it. Pressure from the pump delivers the medication through the catheter at a steady rate.

## **How long will it last?**

The strong local anesthetic used during your surgery will last around 12-18 hours. It's normal to have a completely numb and paralyzed arm or leg during this time. When the strong local anesthetic used during surgery wears off, the medicine going through the catheter will not be as strong. You will get some feeling back at this time. If it feels too uncomfortable, you may push the **blue "DOSE" button** on the pump to give yourself an extra dose of medicine every hour. You will also have medicine that your surgeon has prescribed that you can take by mouth to help relieve your pain.

## **How do I protect my numb body part?**

It's normal to feel some numbness for a few hours even after the **infusion** (the delivery of medicine through the catheter) has been stopped. Protect your numb arm or leg by keeping it close to your body (using a sling or brace). Avoid very hot and very cold objects (like heating pads or ice packs), as they can damage your skin without you being aware of it. You can do your physical therapy exercises that your surgeon gave you.

## **How do I care for my catheter and pump at home?**

While your catheter is in place, a doctor or nurse will call you each day to make sure your catheter is working safely. Some tips for how you can care for your catheter and pump are below:

- Keep the dressing over the catheter clean and dry. Do not take a bath or shower while the catheter is in place. You may bathe by sponge bath.
- Do not put the pump in water.
- Protect the pump from very hot or very cold temperatures.
- It's normal for some of the local anesthetic to leak under the clear dressing. You may add another clear dressing or tape to the area to help

keep the catheter in place. Do not remove or change the dressing yourself, as you may accidentally pull out the catheter.

- If you see the pump or the tubing leaking, please call the Support Hotline number listed below.
- Check all connections to your pump each morning and evening. Keep them tight and keep the tubing free of any bends or kinks.

### **How does the catheter come out?**

The catheter infusion should continue for about 2-3 days after the pump is connected. Once the infusion is complete, you can remove your catheter. Sit down to remove your catheter. You may want to have a family member or friend help you with the catheter removal.

### **Steps for removing the peripheral nerve catheter:**

1. Wash your hands.
2. Stop the infusion.
  - For electronic pumps: Stop the infusion by pressing the “Stop/Start” button. When it shows “Stop Pump?” press “Yes.”
  - For non-electronic pumps (elastomeric/infusion bulb pumps), close the clamp attached to the tubing.
3. Remove the tape and gauze over the tubing.
4. Slowly remove the catheter by pulling it from the skin (it should come out easily with gentle pressure).
5. Once the catheter is completely removed, apply pressure to the site for 5 minutes.
6. Apply an adhesive bandage (Band-Aid®) to the site.
7. Inspect the site for bleeding, redness, or swelling. If any of these symptoms occur, please let us know by calling Anesthesia (the phone number is listed below).

8. If you have an electronic pump, return it in the included box (see directions within the box). If you have a non-electronic pump, you can throw it away in the regular trash.

In the unlikely event that you would need an MRI while the catheter is in place, you should contact the support hotline number below. You may be required to remove your catheter before your MRI.

### **When do I call for help?**

Call **Anesthesia immediately and turn your pump off** if you have the following signs and symptoms:

- Numb or tingling lips or mouth
- Ringing in your ears
- A metal taste in your mouth
- Difficulty breathing or dizziness
- Confusion or strange, unclear speech
- Fever greater than 101.5 degrees Fahrenheit
- Redness, swelling, or severe bruising at the catheter site
- Rash or hives
- Intense pain or redness at the catheter site

Call **Anesthesia** for the following **non-immediate** concerns:

- Numbness or weakness that lasts more than 12 hours after the catheter is removed.
- You feel that you are not getting enough pain relief.
- You feel that your surgical site is too numb.
  - You may turn off your electronic pump temporarily by pressing “Stop/Start” button, then press “Yes.” If you begin to feel pain, you can restart the electronic pump (press the “Stop/Start” button, then press “Yes”).
  - If you have a non-electronic pump, you can clamp the tubing to stop the infusion, and unclamp to restart the infusion.

Call the **Support Hotline** for the following **non-immediate** concerns:

- Questions or issues regarding the pump (such as alarms) or tubing (leaking or accidental disconnection).
- Questions regarding the return of the pump.

### **What is the contact information?**

- **24-hour Support Hotline: Dial 1 (844) 724-6123**
- **Anesthesia: Dial 1 (734) 936-4000** and ask for the Acute Pain Service Doctor on call, pager number 9031.

**While your catheter is in place, a doctor or nurse will call you each day to make sure your catheter is working safely.**

You can find instructions for operating your pump in the pamphlet, “Patient Instruction Guide: Continuous Nerve Block Catheter Instructions,” given to you by your nurse.

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