PATIENT CARE SERVICES

Post-Operative Instructions Nerve Blocks for Breast Surgery

As part of your anesthetic for your recent surgery, you received a peripheral nerve block. Nerve blocks are an injection of long acting local anesthetic (“freezing medication”). This injection of freezing allows for the best potential pain management after your surgery.

PAIN:

**Nerve blocks will prevent pain for an average of 24 hours.** Sometimes the medication will wear off sooner (eg: 18 hours) while occasionally it might last much longer (up to 36 hours). Do not be alarmed if the medication lasts longer, this simply means that you are getting the benefit of less pain after surgery.

What to Expect

You will have been given a PECS 2 block or a Paravertebral block. While the nerve block medication is working, you can expect that your breast area will feel numb and heavy. Also, it is likely that you will not be able to move the muscles of the affected breast region for the duration of time that the nerve block is working. However, the weakness typically wears off before the numbness. As the block wears off, your breast will feel tingly and maybe hot; this is normal. About 5% of people will have 3 to 7 days of numbness or tingling in part of the affected area. When the nerve block is working it is important to be careful to protect the area to avoid injury.

When You Go Home

It is important that you **fill the pain prescription(s) given to you by the surgeon as soon as possible.** As soon as you arrive home today, begin taking acetaminophen (Tylenol™) as prescribed. Also take your anti-inflammatory (Celebrex™ or Ibuprofen) as advised by your surgeon and/or pharmacist. Both Tylenol™ and the anti-inflammatory may be taken together and will help reduce the amount of pain you will feel once the nerve block wears off.

CONTINUED ON OTHER SIDE 🡪

Information is available in alternate formats upon request

When the Freezing Wears Off

When the nerve block wears off, simply take your stronger opioid based pain medication as prescribed at the first sign of discomfort. Always ensure you have taken acetaminophen (Tylenol ™) and your anti-inflammatory (Celebrex™ or Advil™) first then add the stronger opioid based pain medication only if needed as directed by your surgeon. If you have been told to avoid anti-inflammatories (usually due to kidney problems) do not take this medication, however acetaminophen is still safe. Once the freezing completely wears off you can expect to be sore. Continue taking your pain medication as prescribed by your surgeon. If you are going home today, it is important that you **fill your prescription for stronger opioid based pain medication on your way home.**

Bedtime

If your breast feels frozen, it is important to protect it while you are sleeping by putting pillows on that side to prevent you rolling over onto the operative side and potentially injuring the breast while you sleep. Prior to going to sleep tonight, **we recommend placing your stronger opioid based pain medication and a glass of water on a bedside table.** In the event that the nerve block wears off sooner than the average 24 hours, you will be able to simply take your medication and go back to sleep.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Keep the breast area protected and avoid heavy lifting until the medication has worn off, and as directed by your surgeon.

Patient safety is very important to Queensway Carleton Hospital. This information is provided to patients/families to help inform you of your essential role in your own safety.

The information contained in this document is provided to you and your family to help you in your recovery from this procedure. This document is not intended to replace medical advice from your doctor or healthcare team. If you require more specific/additional medical advice, contact your doctor and healthcare team about your particular healthcare needs.

Protect yourself! Clean your hands frequently using soap and water or hand sanitizer and ask your healthcare providers and visitors to do the same. Clean hands save lives.