What to expect after a brachial plexus block

You have had an injection of local anaesthetic around the nerves that supply movement and sensation to your arm. You can expect your arm and/or shoulder to:

- Be heavy and floppy
- Have pins and needles or numbness
- Feel warm

These effects may last from a few hours to a day.

Potential side effects

Local anaesthetic can affect other parts of the body near the nerves. You may have a:

- Hoarse voice.
- Droopy eyelid or blurred vision.
- Slight difficulty breathing.

You may also have bruising around the area where the local anaesthetic was injected.

Some of these effects may also be caused by your operation or by pressure on your nerves whilst you were anaesthetised.

Precautions

In order to maximize your pain relief, please take regular pain killers, as prescribed, BEFORE your block wears off. (i.e. while your arm is still numb)

The signs or symptoms that tell you this type of anaesthetic is wearing off may include:

- Tingling
- Increased sensation and movement to the affected part
- Discomfort or pain

- You should keep your arm in the sling provided, making sure your sensation and movement have returned before you attempt to use your arm normally again.

- Take extreme care moving your arm when it is numb. You should slow cautious movements avoiding awkward positions and over extension of your joints.
When your arm is numb you will be unable to feel heat or cold properly so keep your arm away from constant pressure, radiators/fires/hot water/extremes of cold.

Support

If you are experiencing pins and needles, numbness, weakness or difficulty breathing after 1 week, either inform your surgeon (if your follow-up clinic is within 1 week of your operation) or phone the Queen Elizabeth Hospital switchboard (0191 482 0000) and ask for the on-call anaesthetist.

Should you require further information please refer to http://www.rcoa.ac.uk/docs/BPBAHSS.pdf

Data Protection

Any personal information is kept confidential. There may be occasions where your information needs to shared with other care professionals to ensure you receive the best care possible.

In order to assist us improve the services available your information may be used for clinical audit, research, teaching and anonymised for National NHS Reviews. Further information is available in the leaflet Disclosure of Confidential Information IL137, via Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust website or the PALS Service.

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