PATIENT CARE SERVICES

Post-Operative Instructions

Nerve Blocks

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 control after your surgery.

PAIN:

If you have received a nerve block injection into your upper limb (arm, shoulder or hand) it usually lasts for 12-24 hours. If you have received a nerve block injection into your lower limb (leg, knee, foot or ankle) it usually lasts for 24-48 hours.

**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.

## When the Freezing Wears Off

If the nerve block lasts into the following day, simply take your narcotic pain medication as prescribed at the first sign of discomfort. 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 narcotic pain medication on your way home.**

## When You Get Home Today

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.

## Bedtime

Prior to going to sleep tonight, **we recommend placing your narcotic 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.

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OPERATIVE SITE:

## What to Expect

While the nerve block medication is working, you can expect that your limb will feel numb and heavy. Also, it is likely that you will not be able to move the muscles of the affected limb for the duration of time that the nerve block is working. However, the weakness typically wears off before the numbness. About 5% of people will have 3 to 7 days of numbness or tingling in part of the affected limb.

ACTIVITY:

## Protect the Limb

While the nerve block is working, you will not be able to feel pain. **Therefore, it is very important for you to be very careful to protect the limb.**

For the arm, keep the limb protected in a sling.

For the leg, keep the foot protected and avoid weight bearing until the medication has worn off, and as directed by your surgeon.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

## Your Prescription

If you are going home today, it is important that you **fill your prescription for narcotic pain medication on your way home.**

The information contained on this sheet 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 that your healthcare providers and visitors do the same." Clean hands save lives.