Continuous Nerve Block

For pain control

This handout explains how a continuous nerve block catheter works, and what you can expect when it is placed.

What is continuous nerve block?

In your continuous nerve block procedure, a small plastic tube (catheter) will be placed in your leg. The catheter is placed close to the nerves that control feeling and movement in that leg. A small device pumps numbing medicine through the catheter to control your pain.

What should I expect?

- The nerve block catheter will not take away all of your pain. But, you will not need to take as many pain pills while it is working.
- The leg where the catheter is placed will be numb and may be very weak. You may not be able to put all your weight on it.
- Over time, the pump will slowly lose its shape and flatten. This will take several days, depending on what pump size you have. When the pump is empty, you will see a hard core inside (see photo on page 2).
- A team member will call you each day while your catheter is in place to make sure it is working safely.
- Do not change the flow rate dial unless your doctor tells you to.

Self-care

- Always protect your leg that has the nerve block. Be careful with hot, cold, hard, or sharp surfaces. You can easily get hurt since your leg does not feel pain or pressure.
- Be careful when you move. Your balance may be affected.
- Do not pull on the catheter.
• **Always** have someone help you when you stand or walk while you have this nerve block. Wait until the therapy is stopped and you have regained full feeling and strength in your leg before you try to stand or walk by yourself.

• **Always** use assistive devices such as a knee immobilizer, crutches, or a walker during any walking or standing activities.

• Follow your doctor’s instructions about positioning and activity.

• Keep the catheter insertion site and bandage dry.

**Are there any side effects?**

All procedures involve risks, side effects, and possible problems. It is rare to have serious side effects and problems from this procedure. The most common side effect is short-term pain at the catheter site. Other risks include infection, bleeding, and ongoing weakness.

**When to Call**

The symptoms listed below are very rare and could be serious. **Call us right away if you have any of these symptoms:**

- Numb lips
- Metallic taste in your mouth
- Ringing in your ears
- Severe dizziness
- Nausea and vomiting

**How does the catheter come out?**

When the pump is empty, follow these steps to remove the catheter:

- Sit down.
- Take off the dressing over the catheter. Do not use scissors.
- Firmly grasp the catheter near your skin. With gentle, steady pulling, slide it out from your skin. The catheter should come out easily. You should feel very little or no discomfort.
  
  If you feel any sudden sharp pain when you begin to pull, **stop**. Call us for instructions (see phone numbers in the “Questions” box).

- After you remove the catheter, check the tip for a black mark. Call your provider if you do not see the black mark.
- Then place the catheter and pump in the trash.
- You may place a small bandage over the spot where the catheter was.

To watch a video of how to remove the catheter, please visit [www.myon-q.com/faqs.aspx](http://www.myon-q.com/faqs.aspx).

---

**Questions?**

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions about your catheter or pump.

- Harborview Regional Anesthesia Service:
  Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., call 206.744.7484.
  After hours and on weekends and holidays, please call 206.520.5000 if you have questions or concerns.

- ON-Q 24-hour product support hotline: 800.444.2728