

UW Medicine

HARBORVIEW
MEDICAL CENTER



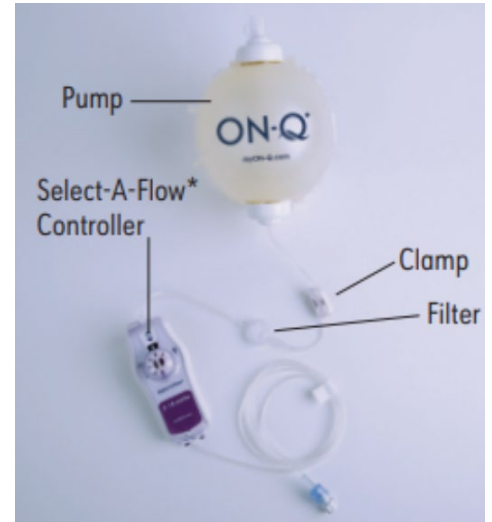
Scan this QR code with your phone to learn more and access helpful videos.

Continuous Nerve Block

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 to help with pain management. The catheter is placed close to the nerves that control feeling and movement in the painful limb. A small device pumps numbing medicine through the catheter to control your pain.



ON-Q* Pump

What should I expect?

- The nerve block catheter will not take away all your pain. But you will not need to take as many pain pills while it is working.
- The device automatically pumps the medication slowly for continuous pain relief.
- The limb where the catheter is placed will be numb and may be 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 should take 2 to 3 days. When the pump is empty, you will see a hard core inside.
- A care team member will routinely contact you 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.



The pump when it is empty.

Image used with permission from Halyard Health.

Self-care

- Always protect your limb that has the nerve block. Be careful with hot, cold, hard, or sharp surfaces. You can easily get hurt since your limb 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 limb before you try to stand or walk by yourself.
- If the catheter is in your leg, always use assistive devices such as a knee immobilizer, crutches, or a walker while walking or standing.
- 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. The most common side effect is short-term pain at the catheter site.

Sometimes a very small amount of the numbing medication leaks underneath the dressing, but this is nothing to worry about. Other risks include infection, bleeding, and continuing weakness. It is rare to have serious side effects and problems from this procedure.

When to Call

Call us right away if you have any of these serious 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 sudden sharp pain when you begin to pull, stop. Call us for instructions (see phone numbers in the "Questions" box on the last page of this handout).
- After you remove the catheter, check the tip for a black mark. Call your provider if you do not see the black mark.
- Place the catheter and pump in the trash.
- You may place a small bandage over the spot where the catheter was.
- To watch a catheter removal video, please visit: www.myon-q/faqs.aspx

Frequently Asked Questions

Will the ON-Q* system treat all my pain?

- Patients experience different levels of pain.
- The ON-Q* system works with other medications or therapies your doctor may prescribe to manage your pain after surgery. With the ON-Q* system, you may need less narcotics and have better pain relief than with narcotics alone.

How do I know the pump is working?

- The pump delivers your medication very slowly. It may take longer than 24 hours after your procedure to notice a change in the size and look of the pump.
- As the medication is delivered, the pump will gradually become smaller.
- You should also take any other pain medicine as instructed by your doctor.

How long will my ON-Q* pump last?

- Depending on the size of your pump, it may take 2-5 days to give all the medication.
- All the medication has been delivered when the ON-Q* pump is empty. The outside of the back will be flat, and a hard tube can be felt in the center of the pump (see picture on page 1).

Where can I find more information about my pump?

- You should be provided with a Patient Guideline prior to discharge (it may be in your carry case).
- Patient Guidelines can also be found on www.myON-Q.com.
- There is a 24-hour Product Support Hotline for questions about your pump — 800.444.2728. Please call your doctor for all medical questions, and dial 911 for an emergency.

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 206.999.0992.
- After hours and on weekends and holidays please call the ON-Q 24-hour product support hotline to speak to a registered nurse:
800.444.2728