it does not hurt) a fine needle is guided towards the nerves and local anaesthetic is injected to block them.

Your hand and arm will start to feel tingly and numb quite soon after the injection. This numbness will be carefully checked before surgery starts. Occasionally a ‘top-up’ of local anaesthetic is needed to ensure the block is complete.

Before surgery a tight band (called a tourniquet) will be wrapped around the top of your arm. This prevents any bleeding in the area of the surgery.

During the surgery a screen will be put up to prevent you seeing the operation. A member of staff will be with you at all times to answer any questions and to ensure you are comfortable.

Following your surgery you will return to the ward within a few minutes and will be able to eat and drink immediately.

When you are ready, and your discharge medication is prepared, you may go home.

**Discharge advice**

Your hand and arm may be numb for up to 24 hours. If the numbness lasts for longer than this you should call the number listed below.

Your hand/arm will be protected in a padded dressing and will be in a sling until the sensation and movement are back to normal. The sling will also reduce swelling and reduce any discomfort following your surgery. You will need to protect your arm until full sensation has returned. You must not attempt to drive.

You must start to take your painkillers as soon as the tingling feeling returns to your hand/arm. You should then take the painkillers regularly and not wait for the pain to worsen before you take them.

You may receive a telephone call from the Hand Unit in the days following your surgery to check on your progress but if you have any concerns, please call one of the numbers below.

**Useful numbers:**

**Ambulatory care**

Monday–Saturday 7.30am–8pm
Telephone: 0121 371 3120

Mobile for advice only 07721 822 838
Monday–Friday 8pm–10pm
Sunday 10am–4pm

**Hand co-ordinators via switch**

Monday–Friday and Sunday 8am–4pm
Telephone: 0121 627 2000

**The Emergency Department (24-hours)**

Telephone: 0121 627 2000 ext 12603/4

Information for patients receiving regional anaesthesia for hand surgery

Delivering the best in care

UHB is a no smoking Trust

To see all of our current patient information leaflets please visit www.uhb.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets.htm
Regional anaesthesia

Most hand surgery in our unit is carried out using a technique known as regional anaesthesia (or ‘block’), where your hand and arm are made numb for surgery. This means you stay awake for your operation. This has many potential benefits. This leaflet will explain what happens during your operation.

Regional anaesthesia is usually all that is needed. Occasionally it is combined with a general anaesthetic, this will be discussed with you in detail by your anaesthetist before you go to the operating theatre.

It is very important that you do not eat for 6 hours before your admission time, this includes sweets and chewing gum. You are allowed to have clear fluids only (black tea or coffee, water, clear squash) for up to 2 hours before your admission time.

Advantages of having a block

• You will be awake for the duration of your surgery and although you may be able to feel some movement and touch you will not be able to feel any pain

• This type of anaesthetic helps to avoid the rare, but potential complications of general anaesthesia and is especially useful in patients who have other health problems

• You will have a shorter recovery period, and have good pain relief for many hours after the operation. When the numbness starts to wear off, we recommend that you take the painkiller tablets that are supplied to you by the hospital before you go home

• You will be back to your normal self much quicker than you would following a general anaesthetic

• You will not be drowsy or ‘hungover’ and be able to go home earlier than after a general anaesthetic

• You will be able to eat and drink immediately after your surgery and there is no risk of a sore-throat nor headache

• The risk of feeling or being sick is minimal with regional anaesthesia

• You will be offered an iPad to watch throughout our time in theatre. Please feel free to bring your own music device or a book. This will remain your responsibility throughout your stay

Potential risks

Although the risks of regional anaesthesia are very small, very occasionally complications can occur.

Examples are:
• nerve damage
• bruising/bleeding
• local anaesthetic reactions

These will all be discussed with you in greater detail by your anaesthetist before theatre when you will have the opportunity to ask any questions.

What will happen to you?

Your block will be carried out by an anaesthetist trained in the technique.

You will change into a hospital gown and be taken round to the block area where you will be made comfortable on a theatre trolley.

A small intravenous line (drip) will be put into the back of the hand that is not being operated on. This may be used for antibiotics or sedation if required.

The hand or arm that is to be operated on will be placed on a padded arm board and you will be attached to some routine monitoring which will measure your pulse, heart-rate and oxygen levels.

The nerves that supply your hand/arm can be blocked either in your armpit or above your collarbone. Your anaesthetist will decide which type of block suits you and the type of operation you are having best. Using an ultrasound probe the anaesthetist will find the nerve that needs to be blocked. After a small injection of local anaesthetic (so