

Caudal block for pain relief after surgery

Information for parents and carers

This information sheet provides you with information about a caudal block. It will go on to explain what it is, why your child may be offered one and what to expect when they have a caudal block. The anaesthetist will assess the risks and benefits to your child and type of surgery they are having when deciding whether to offer a caudal block. You will have an opportunity to discuss this with them on the day of surgery.

What is a caudal block?

A single injection of local anaesthetic is given by placing a needle in the caudal space at the base of the spine near the tail bone. This is performed by an experienced anaesthetist while your child is asleep under general anaesthetic before the operation starts.

How does a caudal block work and when is it offered?

The local anaesthetic solution temporarily numbs or 'blocks' the nerves that supply the area of surgery in the lower part of the body. This stops pain signals getting through to the brain.

We offer caudal blocks for children having day-case surgery on the lower tummy or groin. This includes hernia repair, circumcision and hypospadias surgery. Advantages include better pain relief and lower doses of other pain medicines, such as morphine.

Can any child have a caudal block?

A caudal block is suitable for most children but if not, a different method of pain relief will be used to ensure your child is comfortable. Caudal blocks may not be suitable if your child has broken or infected skin at the site of insertion, an allergy to local anaesthetics, previous spinal problems or surgery or problems with blood clotting.

What are the risks and side effects?

Caudal blocks are safe and serious problems are very rare. Sometimes, it is not possible to perform the procedure or the caudal block does not work as well as expected. If this happens, a different form of pain relief medicine will be given instead.

Very rare problems include:

- Bleeding or infection at the caudal block site
- High levels of local anaesthetic in the blood called 'local anaesthetic toxicity'
- Injury to the nerves causing numbness or weakness for a short period before complete recovery, or in extremely rare cases, normal feeling will not return.

What should I expect afterwards?

A caudal block normally gives pain relief for between three and twelve hours after surgery. Giving additional pain relief medicine like paracetamol and ibuprofen during this time is safe and recommended so that your child is comfortable when the block wears off.

Information for Patients

The temporarily reduced sensation can make it more difficult for your child to pass urine, so our nurses always make sure that your child has a wee before going home.

Your child may have numb, tingly, heavy and/ or weak sensations in their legs due to the local anaesthetic solution. You will need to supervise them closely if they are crawling or walking and be aware that they will not feel hot temperatures or sharp objects in the same way during this period.

When should I be concerned at home?

If your child develops any of the following symptoms, please take them to your nearest Emergency Department and tell the staff your child has had a caudal block:

- Leg numbness, weakness or change in sensation after 24 hours
- Neck stiffness or a new headache worse when standing or sitting up
- Cannot pass urine or open bowels; or a loss of urine/ bowel control if previously toilet trained
- Redness, tenderness or leaking of fluid from injection site (lower back, between buttocks)

Dear Parent or Carer:

If you would like further information or have any questions, please ask the anaesthetist on the day of surgery. Alternatively you contact the Anaesthesia Directorate on 0121 424 3438.

We welcome your views on this patient information leaflet and you can provide feedback using the following Patient Information Feedback email:

PatientInformationLeafletFeedback@uhb.nhs.uk

Contact information:

Anaesthesia Directorate: Telephone Number 0121 424 3438

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk.