Care of Your Arm and Hand after a Nerve Block

To help control your pain after surgery, you had a nerve block. Your anesthesiologist injected numbing medicine around the nerves that send the pain signals from your arm to your brain. This helps you feel little or no pain.

Because your arm or hand is numb, you need to take special care to protect it until the nerve block wears off.

How long will my arm or hand be numb?

- How long the nerve block lasts may vary from person to person. Often it will last between 12 to 20 hours but may last up to 2 days. You may not be able to move your arm or hand during this time.
- As the numbing wears off, you may feel tingling as the nerves start to wake up.

How to best control your pain

It is important to stay ahead of your pain!

- You should take the oral pain medicine your doctor prescribed when you start to feel tingling near your surgical site or when the numbness begin to wear off.
- If you have not started to take the oral pain medicine, you should take it before going to bed. Take your pain medicine even if you are not having any pain so you have some medicine in your body in case the numbing wears off while you are sleeping.

More on next page ➔
Keep your arm safe while it is numb

- Keep your arm in a sling while it is numb to protect it from injury.
- Check your arm often, especially if you change positions. Be sure your arm or hand is not pinched and there is not too much pressure on it.
- Be careful around things that are hot or cold as your feeling is decreased while your arm is numb. You may not feel the heat or cold on your skin.

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.