Home Instructions for Regional Anesthesia

What is regional anesthesia?
Regional anesthesia is the injection of a local anesthetic (like novacaine) near the nerves that sense pain from the area of your body that had surgery. Regional anesthesia is the same as a dentist injecting local anesthesia into your mouth – it numbs an area of your body, so that procedures won’t hurt.

What should I expect after regional anesthesia?
After regional anesthesia, the area of your body that had surgery will be numb for several hours. In fact, the area may be numb for up to 24 hours. The block will wear off slowly and your first sensations will be a tingling feeling in the area that was numb.

What should I do when the block starts to wear off?
As soon as you develop any feeling in the numb area, begin taking the pain medications that your surgeon prescribed. It is much easier to treat the pain before it begins instead of trying to catch up later. If you plan on sleeping and the block has not worn off you should plan on taking your pain medication so that you do not wake up in pain.

What should I be careful about after regional anesthesia?
Because part of your body is numb, you won’t know if you injure it. You should take care to protect that part of your body from being bumped, cut, etc. and you should look at it frequently to make sure it isn’t injured. You should also avoid lying on the numb area while you sleep. If your arm or shoulder has been blocked, you will be given a sling to use until the block wears off. When the block wears off, STOP using the sling. CAUTION: Do not operate any machinery or equipment until the nerve block wears off completely.

What complications should I watch for after regional anesthesia?
The site of your body where the injection was made will be sore for a few days. This pain should go away with any over the counter pain medicine (Tylenol, Advil, Motrin, etc.). It is not uncommon for the area that was numb to have some strange sensations (mild numbness, tingling, etc.) for a few days after the block.

If you experience any of the following changes, then you should immediately contact the surgeon or come to the ER unable to contact your surgeon:

- The sensation doesn’t begin to return to the numb area after 24 hours
- The area that was numb regained sensation but is becoming numb again
- The skin in the numb area turns blue or feels cool
- There is persistent pain in the area that was numb even several days after the surgery

For non urgent questions, please call (520) 626-7221.