



Continuous Supraclavicular Blocks for Arm or Hand Surgery

DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS AND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

You have received a **Continuous Supraclavicular Block (CSB)**, which has numbed your shoulder and arm for surgery. A small catheter in your neck is delivering local anesthetic, or numbing medicine, to the nerves. This catheter delivers the medicine by a disposable pump which will go home with you, and give you pain relief for the next few days!

How long will the CSB last? How do I remove the catheter?

How long the CSB lasts depends on the pump rate. At a rate of 6 ml/hr, the medicine will last about 4 days, or until this date: _____. Keep the catheter in place until the medicine runs out and the pump looks completely deflated.

Please accept our apologies.

To remove the catheter, peel off the dressing, pull out the catheter (it will slide out easily), and throw out both the catheter and the pump. After the catheter is out, it will take several hours for the numbness and weakness to wear off. This is normal. Consider taking pain medication just as the catheter comes out; this way you are more likely to stay comfortable as the numbness wears off.

How to manage your CSB catheter:

Pain at surgical site	Increase the pump rate (see below) and/or take your oral pain medications. Try changing the position of your head or body.
No pain, but arm or fingers feel “too numb”	Decrease the pump rate (see below).
Fluid under the dressing	A small amount of clear or pink fluid around the catheter is normal. If the CSB is still treating your pain, then keep it in place and absorb the fluid with a towel if needed. If the CSB is no longer working, consider removing the catheter.
Symptoms of ringing in ears, metallic taste, or numb lips	This may be due to numbing medicine in the bloodstream. Remove the catheter and call the KP Oakland Anesthesia department.
Catheter has fallen out	Remove the dressing and take oral pain medications as needed

How do I adjust the rate on the pump?

The pump can be adjusted up or down to find the lowest rate that keeps you comfortable. This lets the CSB last as long as possible. Find the dial on the tubing. Open the clear plastic cover. The current rate in “ml/hr” can be seen at the top of the dial. Turn the dial up or down by 2 ml/hr (for example, from 6 ml/hr to 8ml/hr). You will feel the dial “click” into place. After you make a rate change, wait at least two hours to decide if any further changes are needed.

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Is there anything I shouldn't do with the CSB in place?

Your arm will be numb and weak while the CSB is in place. Do NOT remove the sling, use the arm, or operate a motorized vehicle until cleared to do so by your surgeon. Keep the catheter and dressing dry when bathing.

What side effects should I expect with a CSB?

Besides numbing the nerves to your arm, the CSB may numb nerves to your face and neck on the same side. You may notice a hoarse voice, drooping eyelid, small pupil, or nasal stuffiness on that side. These are temporary and last only as long as the CSB.

Ear ringing, numbness around the mouth, or a metallic taste are NOT normal. If you have any of these symptoms, remove the catheter immediately and call the anesthesiologist on call (see the end of this handout for phone numbers).

It has been several weeks since my surgery and I am still feeling numbness, weakness and/or burning pain along my arm. Should I be concerned?

Temporary nerve injury is uncommon, and usually goes away after a few days to weeks. Permanent nerve damage is extremely rare. Please let us know if you are still having symptoms several weeks after your CSB catheter is out.

I am going to the doctor or Emergency Room while my CSB is in place. Should I tell them about my CSB?

Yes! Always mention that you had a *nerve block* when seeing a doctor or having any medical procedure done while your CSB is in place. Show them this handout or ask them to contact the KP Oakland Anesthesia Department with questions.

What if I have questions after my CSB?

During your hospital stay, you will be seen by an anesthesia provider every day while the catheter is in place. After discharge, you will be contacted by an anesthesia provider to check on your progress. If you have any urgent concerns, please call the On-Q 24 Hour Clinical Hotline at **1-800-444-2728**. If the nurses on staff are unable to answer your questions, you may call the KP Oakland Anesthesia Department at **510-752-6238** during regular business hours, or call **510-752-1000** and **ask for the anesthesiologist on call**. After the catheter is out, call your surgeon for any pain-related issues.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have any questions, please ask your physician. If you have questions or need more information about the medications mentioned above, please speak to your pharmacist.

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