Femoral Nerve Blocks 
for Knee Surgery

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is a femoral nerve block?
A Femoral Nerve Block (FNB) numbs the front of the knee to give you pain relief after surgery. Your anesthesia provider will do this procedure, which is separate from the anesthesia for the surgery itself. You may still have some pain at the back of the knee. By numbing this part of the knee, you will have LESS PAIN after surgery and need less medication with fewer side effects!

How is an FNB performed?
The FNB will be placed by your anesthesia provider either before or after surgery. Your provider will perform an ultrasound of the upper thigh area to see the femoral nerve, which supplies the front of the knee. A local anesthetic (numbing medicine) will be injected in this area. For some surgeries, a small catheter may then be placed and taped to your outer thigh (this is called a CFNB, or Continuous Femoral Nerve Block). This catheter will deliver a continuous infusion of local anesthetic. The process takes about 15 to 30 minutes.

Can I walk after I get an FNB?
Yes! Part of your leg will be temporarily numb and weak. ALWAYS ask for help when getting out of bed until the numbness wears off AND you are cleared by your physical therapist. While still numb or weak, wear the knee immobilizer provided when getting out of bed.

How long will the FNB give me pain relief?
Single injections last about 8 to 16 hours. Consider taking pain medication at bedtime, so that you are likely to have a comfortable night’s sleep as the FNB wears off. For CFNBs, catheters usually stay in place and provide relief for 2 days. Once the catheter is removed, it will take several hours for the numbness and weakness to wear off. This is completely normal and expected.

Are there any risks to getting an FNB?
FNBs are very safe. All procedures are done using sterile technique and ultrasound guidance to reduce the risk of bleeding, infection, and nerve injury. Nerve injury is rare, and can be temporary or permanent, causing numbness, weakness, or burning pain. Talk to your anesthesia provider if you have specific concerns.

What if I have questions after my FNB?
During your hospital stay, you will be seen by an anesthesia provider every day if you have a catheter in place. After discharge, you may call the KP Oakland Anesthesia Department at 510-752-6238 on weekdays, during regular business hours. For urgent concerns, call 510-752-1000 and ask for the anesthesiologist on call. If you are discharged with a nerve catheter, please read the handout, Continuous Femoral Nerve Blocks — Discharge Instructions and Frequently Asked Questions.

This information is not intended 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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