

Regional Analgesia

Pain relief to a specific area of the body

What is regional analgesia?

Regional analgesia is one way of giving pain relief right to the site of surgery or injury. Medicine is given under the skin near the spine or the space containing nerves that provide feeling (sensation) to the surgery area. This reduces the pain messages being carried to the brain along the nerves. Regional analgesia procedures are usually done when your child is asleep.

What medicine will my child receive?

Local anesthetics (numbing medicines) are given near the spine or nerves. Since this medicine focuses on one area, there are fewer side effects (nausea, constipation, drowsiness) compared to traditional opioid pain medicines (morphine, oxycodone). This helps children begin moving comfortably and feeling good, so they can get better faster. Other benefits of regional analgesia include excellent pain control and faster awakening from general anesthesia (sleep). Your child may also be prescribed pain medicines by mouth to help with pain.

How does regional analgesia work?

Regional analgesia can be delivered in a variety of ways, depending on the type of surgery. The most common way in young children is called a caudal, which places numbing medicines near the spine. It is used for many common procedures. Because of the many nerves that leave the spine, a caudal reduces pain in the lower abdomen, pelvis, and legs. It typically lasts for 4 to 6 hours.

Another type of regional analgesia places numbing medicine near the nerves that provide feeling (sensation) to a specific surgery area. This treatment usually lasts longer – 6 hours and sometimes up to 24 hours. All procedures carry some risk. The risks of regional analgesia depend on the specific procedure and may include bleeding, infection, drug reaction, or nerve injury. These risks are extremely rare (less than 1%). Your child's anesthesiologist (doctor who specializes in regional analgesia techniques) will discuss options for your child in more detail on the day of surgery and be able to answer any questions you may have at that time.

To Learn More

- Children's Operator: 206-987-0000

Ask to speak to:

_____ (provider name)

- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

How will my child feel?

After any regional analgesia procedure, it is common for your child to feel heavy or weak where the numbing medicine was given. This is because the numbing medicine will also affect the nerves that supply the muscles. The muscle weakness typically wears off before the pain relief wears off.

Protect the numb areas of the body from hot or sharp surfaces until normal feeling (sensation) returns.

When do I call?

- Unrelieved or increased pain
- Redness, swelling, or leaking at the site where the numbing medicine was given
- Movement and muscle strength in the affected areas (arms or legs) has not returned to normal in more than 24 hours
- Any other concerns or questions

Questions?

All members of the team are here to help your child be comfortable. If you have questions, please page the healthcare provider on call.