

Patient information

Pectoralis blocks for breast surgery

Introduction

A pectoralis block is an injection with local anaesthetic in the upper part of your chest. The single injection is given on the same side as the surgery will be taking place.

The block is done after the general anaesthetic is started.

The aim is to numb the upper part of the chest on the side of surgery and it is normally a supplement to a general anaesthetic.

Your anaesthetist on the day might not do this block or may decide this block is not appropriate for your procedure.

Benefits

- The block is given to reduce the dose of strong pain killers required for the surgery and the early post-operative period. Strong pain killers have a tendency to make you drowsy and possibly sick after the surgery.
- Some kinds of surgery also carry the risk of developing chronic pain in the scar tissue and nerve blocks appear to reduce but not eliminate this risk.
- If the block works well you can expect 6 - 12 hours pain reduction and in the best circumstances you are pain free during this period in time.

Surgery

Pectoralis blocks are suited for all breast surgery except the smallest breast procedures. The block will be given in combination with a general anaesthetic.

Complications

The pectoralis block carries its own risks:

- Failure – this basically means that you will end up having a standard general anaesthetic with an amount of strong pain killer.
- Toxicity from the local anaesthetic is a possibility. This is treatable.
- There is a 1:1000 risk of collapse of your lung on the side of the block. This is treatable and will not prevent your surgery but might necessitate a chest x-ray and possibly a small chest drain to get rid of the air.

There might be temporary numbness on the inside of the arm on the side of surgery after the block.

After care / discharge advice

If you experience shortness of breath or chest pains related to your breathing on the side of surgery in the first couple of days after surgery you should contact your own GP or the out of hours GP if it is evening / night to make certain this is not a complication to your block. A chest X-ray might be required.

West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust is actively involved in clinical research. Your doctor, clinical team or the research and development department may contact you regarding specific clinical research studies that you might be interested in participating in. If you do not wish to be contacted for these purposes, please email info.gov@wsh.nsh.uk. This will in no way affect the care or treatment you receive.

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (the new name for DisabledGo) <https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>



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