Peripheral Nerve Blocks for Foot and Ankle Surgery
Patient Information Brochure

Along with a general anesthetic for surgery, a peripheral nerve block may be used as a part of a multi-modal approach to help manage your pain after surgery. Below are some common questions regarding peripheral nerve blocks including risks and benefits.

What is a peripheral nerve block?
A peripheral nerve block is an injection of local anesthetic (numbing medicine) around a nerve used to reduce pain at the surgery site. There are many types of nerve blocks. For foot and ankle surgery, the most common blocks involve the popliteal, sciatic and saphenous nerves.

How long does a peripheral nerve block last?
A single injection of local anesthetic (numbing medicine) can reduce pain for 12-36 hours. However, if a catheter is placed alongside the nerve numbing medication can be delivered continuously for 2-4 days after surgery (i.e. continuous catheter technique).

What are the benefits of a peripheral nerve block?
As part of a comprehensive approach to pain management, peripheral nerve blocks can greatly reduce your immediate post-operative pain. This can decrease your need for additional pain medications. In addition, when performed prior to surgery a nerve block can reduce the amount of general anesthesia you require during the operation.

What are the risks of a peripheral nerve block?
The most common risks of this procedure include but not are not limited to:

• Bleeding at the injection site
• Bruising at the injection site
• Infection
• Nerve injury (numbness, weakness, increased sensitivity, burning pain, motor dysfunction)

In the early post-operative period, mild paresthesias (numbness and tingling) can occur in patients who have a peripheral nerve block. Most of those symptoms resolve within days to weeks after the surgery. However, in a few patients these symptoms may last up to one year after surgery and rarely the symptoms never resolve. Serious (permanent) nerve injury is rare after a peripheral nerve block.

If you have any further questions please contact our office at (727) 596-8900 or discuss this anesthetic option with the anesthesia staff prior to your surgery.