

Patient Information

**Local anaesthetic  
information**

***Dermatology  
& Plastic Surgery***

If you have any questions please do not  
hesitate to ask a member of the nursing  
or medical staff, or call the  
Dermatology/Skin Cancer Specialist  
Nurse:

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A **local anaesthetic** has been recommended for your operation.

### **What is a local anaesthetic?**

A local anaesthetic is a drug that is injected into the skin to make it numb.

### **How does a local anaesthetic work?**

Local anaesthetics work by temporarily switching nerves off so that no pain is felt. The local anaesthetic is injected around the area where the operation is going to take place.

This may sting or burn for a few seconds before the area becomes numb. The feeling of pain goes away much sooner than the feeling of touch, so do not be surprised if you can still feel pressure or movement.

Once you and the doctor are happy that the area is numb to pain the procedure can begin.

Although the starting area is numbed, occasionally the operation may reach areas that have not been numbed. If this happens your doctor will give you some more local anaesthetic.

Local anaesthetic works for a few hours depending on the type of drug, the dose used and the body area operated on. After this time, the areas should go back to normal.

### **What risks or complications may occur with a local anaesthetic?**

Serious problems with local anaesthetics are very rare indeed. Possible problems are:

- Not enough anaesthesia given – this can be corrected by giving more local anaesthetic. Sometimes other types of local anaesthetic are used as well. **All-ways let the doctor know if you are feeling pain**
- Allergy to local anaesthetics is extremely rare. It is important that you tell the person giving you your local anaesthetic about any allergic reaction problems you may have had in the past
- Bleeding can occur if the needle used to inject the local anaesthetic hits a blood vessel. This usually leaves a bruise only
- Permanent nerve damage after local anaesthetic technique is very rare indeed. Occasionally the local anaesthetic has a longer effect than expected (24 - 48) hours but this usually wears off of its own accord.
- Rapid absorption into the bloodstream is very rare but can occur if the local anaesthetic is accidentally injected into the blood stream or if is absorbed into the blood stream more quickly than usual.

This can temporarily affect the heart or brain, which can be serious. Therefore, the dose of local anaesthetic is always limited and care is taken to avoid injection into the bloodstream.

### **Summary**

A local anaesthetic is a very safe and effective way of numbing the area to be operated on and for providing pain relief afterwards. It has been recommended as the best way to provide an anaesthetic for your operation. Risks and complications are very rare. If you have any questions that are not answered by this document, you should ask the person who is giving the local anaesthetic or another member of the healthcare team.