

## **ANAESTHESIA FOR SHOULDER SURGERY**

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This information sheet provides you with information concerning the anaesthetic for your upcoming shoulder surgery. The exact details of the anaesthetic technique vary from patient to patient, and this will be discussed with you prior to your surgery.

### **General Anaesthesia:**

In almost all cases, patients will be given a general anaesthetic for their shoulder surgery (i.e. you will be asleep).

Arthroscopic (key-hole) shoulder surgery is often performed in the 'sitting' position. This means that after you go to sleep, you will be carefully positioned in an upright position to allow performance of your surgery.

To monitor your blood pressure in this position, your anaesthetist will often perform an arterial line. This is an injection in the non-operative wrist (usually when you are asleep) that allows continuous monitoring of your blood pressure. This injection can leave a bruise & may be sore for a few days.

### **Pain relief:**

If a nerve block has not been performed, local anesthetic will be injected by the surgeon during your procedure.

Because shoulder surgery is often characterised by significant levels of post-operative pain, your anaesthetist will prescribe a number of medications to help manage your pain.

These medications include opioid analgesics (e.g. Oxycodone – immediate & slow-release & Tapentadol); non-steroidals (e.g. Panadol Osteo, Meloxicam) & pre-gabalin (Lyrica).

If opioid analgesics are required, there is a risk of constipation in many patients. Use of oral laxatives (e.g. Coloxyl with Senna) is advised.

### **Nerve blocks:**

For some procedures, your anaesthetist may offer a nerve block to provide pain-relief following shoulder surgery.

This is performed prior to your anaesthetic and involves the injection of local anaesthetic under the skin in the neck. It numbs the nerves that provide sensation and movement to the shoulder and arm.

The block usually lasts 8 – 24 hours, during which time your arm will feel heavy and weak. In addition to excellent pain relief, this block reduces the incidence of drowsiness, nausea and vomiting after the operation.

There are several side effects related to nerve blocks for shoulder surgery.

Mostly these are minor and self-limiting and may include:

- A lump or bruise at the injection site, which may persist for a few days after the operation.
- Persistent numbness or tingling in a small area of the arm, which may last a day or so.
- A hoarse voice or mild drooping of the eye on the side of the operation.

There are also some more serious risks, just as there are with any procedure where local anaesthetic is given.

They are exceptionally rare but may include:

- Abnormal heart rhythms
- Seizures
- Permanent nerve damage

**After the operation:**

You will usually be discharged with a combination of opioid analgesics (Oxycodone) & non-steroidals (e.g. Panadol Osteo & Meloxicam (or Naproxen SR)).

If given a nerve block, it will wear off 8 - 24 hours after the operation and around this time you will regain sensation and movement of the shoulder. You will also start experiencing pain around this time and it is important that you take analgesic tablets as directed by your anaesthetist.