

Regional anaesthetic



A regional anaesthetic is suitable for certain minor procedures on the hand, lower arm, foot, and lower leg.

The extremity (arm or leg) is numbed with a medicine that blocks the feeling of pain.

A tourniquet (device that compresses blood vessels) is used to interrupt the blood supply to the arm or leg in question for the duration of the procedure. The local anaesthetic is injected close to the operation site, which means it can develop its effect in the desired location and does not flow into the circulatory system.

Risks and side effects of a regional anaesthetic

The risk of severe anaesthesia-related incidents has been significantly reduced by close monitoring through technical devices and continuous care provided by your anaesthetist. Although many patients are operated on as emergencies or are seriously unwell, severe anaesthesia-related incidents are extremely rare these days, which means there is no need for you to worry unnecessarily about this. However, we would still like to inform you of possible risks and side effects of a regional anaesthetic. Ultimately, it is best if we provide you with an in-depth explanation of risks and side effects in a personal discussion that takes into account your personal needs and circumstances.

Frequently asked questions about a regional anaesthetic:

“What happens if a nerve-block anaesthetic isn’t strong enough?”

Sometimes, with a regional anaesthetic, the local anaesthetic does not reach the nerve tissue fibres evenly. If this happens, your anaesthetist will often be able to inject a small, additional amount of the local anaesthetic into individual nerves. If the effect of the regional anaesthetic is not strong enough to allow pain-free surgery for you or if other complications occur, it may be necessary to switch to a general anaesthetic.

“Will I be awake during the operation?”

If you would like to, you can be awake to experience the operation. However, if you would rather sleep, we can add a sleeping drug to your infusion (drip). You can also relax by listening to music through headphones.

“Can I watch the operation?”

With any type of surgery, the most important issue is to prevent bacteria and other damaging micro-organisms from entering the body. For this reason, the skin is carefully disinfected beforehand and the area to be operated on is covered with sterile drapes on all sides, which means you will not be able to watch. However, if you are having an endoscopic examination (e.g. a joint arthroscopy), you may under certain circumstances be able to follow the procedure on a monitor.

“Is there a risk of an allergic reaction?”

As is the case for a general anaesthetic, serious anaesthesia-related incidents, e.g. cardiovascular arrest or respiratory arrest, are extremely rare. These may be caused by intolerance reactions to the medicines used or by the accidental injection of the local anaesthetic into a blood vessel. Lasting nerve damage, e.g. paralysis, resulting from bruises or nerve injuries, are also extremely rare. Bruises generally go away on their own.

