

PATIENT EDUCATION - SPINAL ANESTHESIA

What is spinal anesthesia?

- Spinal anesthesia involves a single injection of local anesthetic (numbing medication) around the spinal cord in your lower back. This local anesthetic numbs the nerves that supply pain sensation and motor function to the lower abdomen and legs.
- The numbing medication lasts for 1-2 hours and allows surgical procedures to be performed without any sensation of pain or feeling. This can last longer in certain circumstances.
- After numbing the skin of the back, an experienced anesthesiologist will place the spinal anesthetic. Your lower abdomen, legs, and feet will quickly be numbed, at which time you will be positioned for surgery and given sedation or general anesthesia to keep you asleep.
- An anesthesiologist will be caring for you during the entire surgery to monitor your vital signs and assess your level of comfort.

What are the benefits of spinal anesthesia?

- Spinal anesthesia allows you to have surgery without exposure to general anesthesia requiring more intravenous medications and a breathing tube. Multiple studies have shown that patients who undergo spinal anesthesia instead of general anesthesia are at decreased risk of respiratory and cardiac events, overall complications, and heart rate changes during the surgery.

What are the risks involved with spinal anesthesia?

- Risks of spinal anesthesia include the possibility of bleeding (at the injection site), heart rate and blood pressure changes, medication side effects, inability to place the spinal anesthetic requiring general anesthesia, and damage to nerves and tissues near the injection site.

What should I expect the day of surgery?

- Your anesthesia provider will meet with you before the procedure to discuss the anesthetic plan. If your anesthesiologist thinks a spinal anesthetic is the best option for you, then you may or may not be given some relaxing medication to facilitate placing the spinal. Your anesthesia plan is tailored specifically to your surgical and personal conditions and health history.
- When it is time for the procedure, you will be taken to the operating room where the spinal will be performed in a sitting or side-lying position. The positioning is crucial for the medication placement.
- Upon completion of the surgery, you will be transported to the recovery room. Expect to stay in the recovery room for a brief period for monitoring. The feeling in your legs will slowly return and you will be transported to the Same Day Surgery or your inpatient room to have a physical therapy evaluation to start walking as soon as safely possible.