

A05lite Spinal Anaesthetic

This document will give you information about a spinal anaesthetic. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

What is a spinal anaesthetic?

A spinal anaesthetic involves injecting drugs into an area called the subarachnoid space near the spinal cord. The drugs numb your nerves to give pain relief in certain areas of your body. Spinals can be used either on their own while you are awake, or in combination with sedation or general anaesthesia. They can also be used after your operation to give effective pain relief.

What does the procedure involve?

Your anaesthetist will insert the needle, inject drugs through it and then remove the needle (see figure 1).

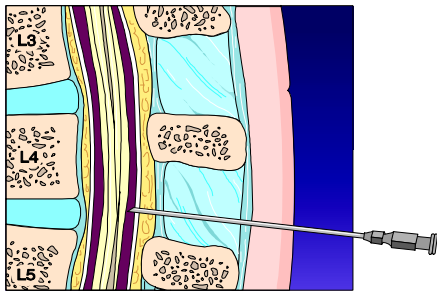


Figure 1

Spinal needle placed in the subarachnoid space

It should not be painful, although it can be uncomfortable.

A spinal anaesthetic usually lasts between one to three hours. The anaesthetist will put enough drugs through the needle to make sure that it lasts longer than the expected length of the operation.

What complications can happen?

- Failure of the spinal
- Low blood pressure
- Headache
- Itching
- Bladder-emptying problems
- Backache
- Loss or change of hearing
- Cardiac arrest
- Unexpected high block
- Nerve damage

Summary

A spinal can be used for most people, usually giving a safe and effective form of pain relief both during and after your operation.

Further information

- NHS smoking helpline on 0800 022 4332 and at www.smokefree.nhs.uk
- www.eatwell.gov.uk – for advice on maintaining a healthy weight
- www.eidoactive.co.uk – for information on how exercise can help you
- www.aboutmyhealth.org – for support and information you can trust
- Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland at www.aagbi.org
- Royal College of Anaesthetists at www.rcoa.ac.uk
- Royal College of Anaesthetists and Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland www.youranaesthetic.info
- NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 (0845 606 46 47 – textphone)

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