

Interscalene Block aka Nerve Block

What Is An Interscalene Block (ISB)?

Interscalene blocks are used for pain during and after surgery on the shoulder. An interscalene block is the injection of a numbing medicine (local anesthetic) around a group of nerves in the neck area. This nerve block in the neck stops you from feeling pain in the shoulder and arm so that shoulder surgery can be done with or without general anesthesia.

How is an Interscalene Block (ISB) performed?

- You will lay flat on your back with your neck turned away from the surgical side. You may be given medication through an intravenous (IV) to help you relax
- Your neck will be cleaned to reduce the risk for infection
- The doctor may use an ultrasound machine to help find the exact location of the nerve
- Once the location is found, the doctor will numb the skin with local anesthetic
- Your doctor will use a nerve stimulator to guide the needle to numb the correct nerves
- The nerve stimulator will pass a small amount of current down your arm that will make your shoulder/arm twitch
- The needle will then be removed and the ISB procedure is complete

What Are the Benefits of an Interscalene nerve block (ISB)?

- a. Remove or reduce pain
- b. Reduce risk of nausea, vomiting and sedation from general anesthesia
- c. Allows for early intake of foods and drinks
- d. Provide faster recovery and earlier discharge from the hospital

Pain Control:

- a. Numbness from the local anesthetic may last 8-36 hours; result varies with each patient.
- b. After leaving the hospital, it is very important that you take the pain medication at the prescribed times from the moment the block begins to wear off.

Management of the “Numb Arm”:

- a. Be careful not to come in contact with very hot or cold items as it can injure the skin
- b. Carry the “numb” arm in a sling until normal sensation and motor function return and/or until your doctor instructs you to stop wearing the immobilizer.

What Are the Side Effects of an Interscalene Block (ISB)?

Most of the side effects of an ISB are related to the numbing of the nerves that supply the shoulder and arm. Any or all of the following can occur, but will resolve as the effects of the local anesthetic wears off:

- a. Shortness of breath –the numbness of the nerves controlling the diaphragm may make you feel like you are not taking a deep breath as you did before the ISB
- b. Blurred vision- Seen as a drooping eyelid and slightly blurred vision on the side of the nerve block.
- c. Hoarseness – Local anesthetic may numb the nerves supplying the voice box.
- d. Difficulty swallowing – Numbness of the throat and nerves supplying the voice box.

What Are the Risks of an Interscalene Block (ISB)?

ISB is considered a safe procedure. However, like many other medical procedures, there are risks that may occur such as a failed block (no numbness to the nerves), bleeding, infection, reaction to the local anesthetic including seizure and cardiac arrest, spinal block, epidural block, collapsed lung, nerve injury or continual tingling sensation.

This education handout is designed to inform you of the ISB procedure. Please feel free to share any concerns you may have with your Anesthesiologist on the day of surgery. The information provided here is not a substitute for having a discussion with you Anesthesiologist.

DR. DANIEL C. ACEVEDO FAAOS
www.LAshoulderelbow.com

1700 E CESAR E CHAVEZ AVE #2200, LOS ANGELES, CA 90033 PH. 323-264-7600 FAX 323-261-8027
23502 LYONS AVE #202A, VALENCIA, CA 91321 PH. 818-788-0101x4451 FAX 818-788-4158
18840 VENTURA BLVD #204, TARZANA, CA 91356 Tel. 818-708-3333 FAX 818-708-9643
16530 VENTURA BLVD #100, ENCINO, CA 91436 Tel. 818-788-0101 FAX 818-855-2493