

Paravertebral Block Patient Education

Dear Patient,

At Brigham and Women's Hospital, we believe it is important for you to understand your healthcare. It is our hope that this informational guide will assist you and help you understand your procedure.

What is a "Paravertebral Block" and how is it helpful for me during and after my surgery?

- A "paravertebral block" is when a numbing medication is put around nerves just after they exit between the bones of your spine.
- Numbing these nerves will reduce the pain you feel after the surgery for 12 to 24 hours.
- This procedure is done by your specially trained anesthesia team to lower the pain that you feel after some kinds of surgery on the chest or abdomen.
- In addition to lowering your pain, the block can also lower the amount of medicine you need for general anesthesia during your surgery.

How is the procedure done?

- Before your surgery, we will place an intravenous line and give you medicine to help you relax.
- To make sure the block is safely and effectively inserted in the correct place, your team will feel the bones in your back and use an ultrasound.
- Once the correct area is found, your skin will be cleaned and numbed with a small needle.
- The "paravertebral block needle" will be inserted into the same area of your skin. You may feel pressure at this time and cramping when the medicine is injected. This may be repeated several times in different areas of your back.
- The whole block procedure takes about 10 to 30 minutes, and you may be asked to come in slightly earlier on the day of surgery.

What are the benefits?

- shorter time to recover from anesthesia
- less pain
- lower need for morphine-like medications to manage your pain (ex: morphine/oxycodone/fentanyl)
- less chance of nausea

What are the risks? (NOTE: These risks are RARE, but possible)

- no decrease in your pain
- pain, bleeding or infection where the block needle was inserted
- low blood pressure
- injury to lung lining, which leads to a small amount of air forming around the lung
- nerve injury
- overdose of numbing medicine

If I decide to have a paravertebral block, may I still have general anesthesia for the surgery?

- Yes, paravertebral blocks are usually combined with general anesthesia.

Choosing to have a paravertebral block is your decision as a patient. Your anesthesia team will help you make a decision based on what is best for you, and may decide not to offer to do this block if there are medical reasons why it would not be a good idea.

For more information, please contact BWHAnesRegional@partners.org or call 617-732-5179

Best wishes for your upcoming surgery!

*Sincerely,
Your BWH Anesthesiology team*