

## Spinal Anaesthetic for Hip & Knee Replacements

This card summarises the type of anaesthetic routinely given for hip and knee replacement surgery. You can discuss this further with your anaesthetist and they will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

### What is a Spinal Anaesthetic?

- A spinal anaesthetic is routinely given for hip and knee replacement surgery and, for the majority of patients, is the recommended option.
- A spinal anaesthetic is an injection of anaesthetic between the bones in the lower back that will temporarily 'numb' the nerves supplying the lower half of the body so that you are comfortable during and immediately after your operation.
- You will remain awake with a spinal anaesthetic. However, we can offer additional sedation to help you relax or sleep during your operation if you wish. Alternatively, you are welcome to use headphones to listen to music during your operation.
- Your anaesthetist and anaesthetic assistant will remain with you throughout your operation to look after your safety and wellbeing.

### How is a Spinal Anaesthetic Performed?

- When it is time for your operation you will be brought into the anaesthetic room where you will meet the team and go through a safety checklist.
- The anaesthetic assistant will attach some routine monitoring to measure your heart rate, blood pressure and oxygen levels. A thin plastic tube (cannula) will be inserted into the back of your hand so that any medications and fluids you may need can be given.
- The anaesthetic assistant will then help you into the correct sitting position for the spinal anaesthetic and a cold cleaning solution will be sprayed onto your back.
- The anaesthetist will then proceed with the spinal anaesthetic injection. Occasionally this can be difficult to perform. In this situation a general anaesthetic may be given instead.
- After the spinal anaesthetic injection, it is normal to feel an initial warm, tingling sensation in your legs. Your legs will also feel heavy and you may still have a sensation of touch and pressure but you should not feel anything painful or cold.
- A cold stick or spray will be used to check that the spinal anaesthetic is working well before moving into the surgical theatre to start your operation.

## What are the Benefits of a Spinal Anaesthetic?

- Good pain relief immediately after your operation
- Less need for strong painkillers after your operation
- Reduced risk of chest infections after your operation
- Less negative effect on the lungs and breathing
- Reduced risk of blood clots in the legs
- Reduced nausea and vomiting
- Earlier return to eating and drinking

## What are the Risks of a Spinal Anaesthetic?

<u>Type of Risk</u>	<u>How common is it?</u>
Low Blood Pressure	Common
Nausea	Common
Headache	Uncommon (Between 1 in 100 and 1 in 500)
Nerve Injury	Temporary Uncommon (1 in 1000)
	Permanent Rare (Between 1 in 24,000 and 1 in 50,000)
	Paralysis Very Rare (Between 1 in 54,000 and 1 in 142,000)
Bleeding (incl. Haematoma)	Very Rare
Infection (incl. Abscess/ Meningitis)	Very Rare
Conversion to a General Anaesthetic	Uncommon

Further information is available at [www.rcoa.ac.uk/patients/patient-information-resources](http://www.rcoa.ac.uk/patients/patient-information-resources)