



A journey to hand surgery and what to expect A patient's guide

Surgery on the Upper Limb (Shoulder, Elbow, Arm, Hand)

Information

This leaflet explains the hospital journey for patients undergoing surgery to the upper limb (shoulder, elbow, arm, hand) at The Whittington Hospital.

The information provided is useful for patients having hand surgery in the day treatment unit under nerve block anaesthesia only.

Contents

Page

1. Before The Day of Surgery	2
Fasting Times:	
Prepare and Bring the Following:	
Do not do the Following:	
Looking after your hands:	
Unable to attend:	
2. On The Day of the Operation	3
At the Day Surgery Unit:	
In the Anaesthetic Room:	
During the Operation:	
3. After the Operation in Recovery Ward	4



BEFORE THE DAY OF SURGERY

Fasting times:

Solid Foods:

Do not eat for 6 hours before you arrive in hospital. This includes sweets, chewing gum, drinks with milk, carbonated drinks and fruit pulps.

(Note: Milk is considered as a solid food)

Drinks:

You are allowed clear fluids (e.g. Black tea or coffee, water, clear squash) for up to 2 hours before you arrive in hospital.

(Please note that these instructions are important. If there is food or liquid in your stomach during your anaesthetic, it could come up into your throat and lungs and endanger your life. Not following these instructions could result in last minute cancellation of your surgery)

Prepare and bring the following:

- All your current medicines and prescription (if possible).
- All your information on other tests and treatments from other hospitals
- Any information you or your family may have had with anaesthetics
- Any recent blood pressure measurements
- Any recent blood sugar measurements
- Dressing gown/Slippers/Small change
- Book/Music/Earphones/Headphones (if required to past time)

Do not do the following:

- Do not bring valuables (jewellery) or large amounts of money. The hospital will not be responsible for any losses or damages to valuables or money.
- Do not smoke or consume alcohol on the day of surgery.

Looking after your hands:

- Avoid activities that might injury your hands or skin
- Continue your normal regime of washing and moisturising your hands.
- Clean your hands on the day of surgery including your nails
- It is advisable to remove nail polish and artificial nails as they may become damage during surgery.
- Please remove all rings and bracelets on the hand to be operated on.

Please Contact Us If:

- You are unwell (e.g. cough, cold, having an infection, flu, high temperature)
- You are unable to attend for any other reasons.
- You have a recent injury (in last 10 days) to your hand to be operated on (e.g. burn, wound, insect bite, and any other injuries).

(Note: Please leave your name, hospital number and contact details if we are not able to answer your call).



ON THE DAY OF THE OPERATION

At the Day Surgery Unit:

- Proceed to reception at the Day Surgery unit (Level 2) to check-in.
- You will meet one of the anaesthetic and surgical team doctors for discussion and consent process.
- You will then change into a hospital gown and be taken to the nerve block room.

In the Nerve Block Room:

- You will be attached to routine monitoring (e.g. Blood pressure, pulse and oxygen level measurements).
- A cannula (IV drip) will be placed in a vein of your hand or arm that is not operated on. This is needed for safety and to deliver medicines and fluids if required.
- An anaesthetist will then perform the nerve block under ultrasound guidance.
- Anaesthetists in training can be expected to watch or perform the block under direct supervision from an anaesthetist trained in the technique.

In the Anaesthetic Room:

- After having your nerve block, you will be asked to wait in the anaesthetic room.
- You will continue to have routine monitoring (e.g. Blood pressure, pulse and oxygen level measurements).
- The quality of your nerve block will be checked before surgery is started.

During the Operation:

- A tight surgical band (tourniquet) may be wrapped on top of your arm. This will reduce bleeding at the surgical site.
- A screen will be positioned for sterility and you will not see the surgery being done (unless you want to).
- You may be able to listen to your own music on your device with headphones (ask if this is possible).
- There may be up to 10 people in theatres. They each have a role in helping to look after you.
- If you are offered sedation
 - ✓ You will feel drowsy and may go to sleep
 - ✓ You will be given oxygen through a plastic facemask
 - ✓ Your memories of the operating theatre may be patchy.



AFTER THE OPERATION:

- You will spend some time in the recovery ward before going home.
- Your arm will still be heavy and needs to be supported (e.g. with a sling), until your muscles work again.
- Please eat and drink when you are able to.
- Your discharge medication and nerve block aftercare information will be prepared and you may go home when you are ready.

For further information, please see:

Whittington Hospital's Patient Information Leaflets on Surgery of the Upper Limb (Shoulder, Elbow, Arm, Hand):

1. Leaflet A – Nerve block anaesthesia for the upper limb
2. Leaflet C – Care of the arm after nerve block anaesthesia

Royal College of Anaesthetists: Nerve block anaesthesia video for patients:

<https://www.ra-uk.org/index.php/patient-info-video>

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please contact us on 020 7288 3182. We will try our best to meet your needs.

Twitter.com/WhitHealth

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Whittington Health NHS Trust

Magdala Avenue

London

N19 5NF

Phone: 020 7272 3070

www.whittington.nhs.uk

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