

Local Anaesthetic Explained

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This leaflet explains what local anaesthetic is, how it works, and when you may need it. It also outlines the benefits and risks of using local anaesthetic and what it might feel like. Importantly, it tells you what you will need to plan for your care after the procedure. It has been written by patients, patients' representatives, and anaesthetists, working together.

What is Local Anaesthetic?

Local anaesthetic is a type of medication used to numb a specific area of your body during a procedure. It allows you to remain awake and aware while preventing you from feeling pain in the treated area. The anaesthetic is usually administered through an injection.

How Does Local Anaesthetic Work?

Local anaesthetic works by blocking the nerves in the targeted area from sending pain signals to your brain. This numbing effect typically begins within a few minutes of the injection and can last for several hours, depending on the type of anaesthetic used.

When is Local Anaesthetic Used?

Local anaesthetic is commonly used for minor surgical procedures, dental work, and other medical treatments that do not require you to be unconscious. It is ideal for procedures where only a small area needs to be numbed.

Benefits of Local Anaesthetic

- **Awake and Aware:** You remain conscious and can communicate with your healthcare provider during the procedure.
- **Quick Recovery:** The effects of local anaesthetic wear off relatively quickly, allowing you to resume normal activities sooner.
- **Fewer Side Effects:** Local anaesthetic generally has fewer side effects compared to general anaesthesia.

Risks and Side Effects

While local anaesthetic is generally safe, there are some potential risks and side effects, including:

- **Temporary Numbness:** The treated area may remain numb for a few hours after the procedure.
- **Mild Discomfort:** You may experience mild discomfort or a burning sensation at the injection site.
- **Allergic Reactions:** Although rare, some people may have an allergic reaction to the anaesthetic.

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What to Expect During the Procedure

- **Preparation:** Your healthcare provider will clean the area and may apply a topical anaesthetic to reduce discomfort from the injection.
- **Injection:** The local anaesthetic will be injected into the targeted area. You may feel a slight pinch or burning sensation.
- **Numbing Effect:** The area will become numb within a few minutes, and you should not feel any pain during the procedure.

After the Procedure

- **Care Instructions:** Follow any specific care instructions provided by your healthcare provider to ensure proper healing.
- **Pain and Discomfort:** It is normal to experience some pain and discomfort after the anaesthetic wears off. Over-the-counter pain relievers, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen, can help manage this.
- **Activity:** Avoid strenuous activities for the rest of the day and follow any additional recommendations from your healthcare provider.

Contact Information and Follow-Up

- **Concerns or Questions:** If you have any issues or concerns after the procedure, contact your healthcare provider at the provided phone numbers or email.
- **Follow-Up Appointments:** You may need to schedule a follow-up appointment to ensure proper healing and address any concerns.

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