

What type of Anaesthetic to expect

The most common type of Anaesthetic we use for shoulder surgery is a combination of General Anaesthesia (being asleep) and a Local Anaesthetic injection (Interscalene Block or a Subacromial Injection).

What is an Interscalene Block?

This is used for the more painful types of shoulder surgery, such as rotator cuff repairs, shoulder replacements and frozen shoulder operations. An injection of Local Anaesthetic is made into the side of the neck which numbs the nerves that supply the shoulder. The Interscalene block (ISB) provides excellent pain relief for **up to 24 hours** after shoulder surgery and is used because the pain from these types of operations is difficult to control using normal painkillers such as morphine.

The Benefits of an ISB

- Excellent pain relief
- Reduced risk of nausea and vomiting
- Speedier recovery from General Anaesthetic
- Earlier discharge from hospital
- Less chance of staying overnight in hospital
- Earlier intake of food & drink

ISBs are used for many people having operations all over the world. It has proved to be very safe but like any procedure it has side effects and risks. Most of these are minor and are due to some of the Local Anaesthetic numbing other nerves close to the shoulder nerves. These side effects wear off with the Local Anaesthetic within 24 hours.

Serious complications are uncommon and include infection at the injection site & bruising of the shoulder nerves which can lead to some numbness or tingling lasting longer than the usual 24 hours, but which usually resolves completely within 2 weeks.

Although longer lasting nerve damage or numbness is a potential risk, as it is with the shoulder surgery itself, this is fortunately rare.

Common side effects of an ISB

Hoarse voice - 15% - wears off within 24 hours. Take care when you first start to eat and drink after the operation as some of your throat may be numb from the Local Anaesthetic

Droopy eyelid - 20% - wears off within 24 hours

Minor bruising at injection site

Your Anaesthetist will be happy to discuss the injection with you before surgery.

Care of the numb arm

When you wake up after the operation your arm will feel numb and heavy for up to 24 hours. Some tingling in the fingers is also common. It is important that you take extra care of your arm and keep it in a sling until the feeling comes back. Avoid placing your arm or shoulder in contact with very hot, cold or sharp surfaces as you will not realise if you are hurting yourself.

Subacromial Injection

This injection is only suitable for less painful types of shoulder surgery such as shoulder "decompressions" as it does not give total numbness of the shoulder. It involves an injection into the shoulder joint during surgery and gives around **8 hours** pain relief.

Going Home

When you are ready to go home you will be given a supply of painkilling tablets. It is important that you take these at the regular prescribed times, particularly before going to sleep. This is to avoid unpleasant pain when the Local Anaesthetic wears off.