

Your Surgery

at New England Baptist Hospital

Spinal Anesthesia: What You Need to Know

What is spinal anesthesia?

Spinal anesthesia is medicine administered to numb the lower part of your body so you do not feel pain during surgery. Spinal anesthesia is injected into your lower back. You may need this for surgery such as a hernia repair or lower extremity surgery (Hip, Knee, Foot, Ankle, Etc.). You will be numb from your umbilicus (belly button) down to your toes, depending on the surgery.

How can I prepare for spinal anesthesia?

Tell your healthcare provider if you or anyone in your family has ever had problems with anesthesia. Please arrange to have someone drive you home from the hospital. It is best to have someone stay with you for 24 hours after you have had anesthesia or sedation. Your healthcare provider will talk to you about how to prepare for spinal anesthesia and will instruct you not to eat or drink anything after midnight on the day of your procedure. This decreases your chance of complications during and after surgery.

Tell the providers about all of the medicines you take, including vitamins and herbs. They will tell you which medicines to take, or not take, on the day of your procedure. You may need to stop taking certain medicines several days before you have spinal anesthesia, especially blood thinners.

What will happen during spinal anesthesia?

Your healthcare provider will inject medicine into your lower back. You will be sedated and in twilight sleep. Your lower body will be numb and you will not be able to move your legs once the medicine starts to work.

What will happen after spinal anesthesia?

After your procedure or surgery, you will be taken to a post anesthesia room where you can rest until the numbness goes away. You will be able to move your legs fully in 1 to 4 hours as the medicine wears off and this will be monitored by staff. You may be cold after the procedure, in which case your care team will apply warming therapy (e.g. warming comfort gown or warm blanket, etc.). You will then either be taken to a hospital room or discharged to your home. You may have nausea or itching from the anesthesia. These should last a short time.

What are the risks of spinal anesthesia?

You may have a headache or experience bleeding or infection, but all these risks are rare.

Care Agreement

You have the right to help plan your care. Learn about your health condition and how it may be treated. Discuss options with your healthcare providers to decide what treatment plans are safest for you. You always have the right to refuse treatment.

December 2018