

Caudal Block – Information for Parents



PACSA
PAEDIATRIC ANAESTHESIA COMMUNITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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What is a caudal block?

A caudal block is a pain-relieving injection of local anaesthetic at the base of the back that is performed while your child is under general anaesthetic. The local anaesthetic numbs the nerves that go to the area of the operation, providing a good form of pain relief for surgery below the belly button, such as inguinal hernia repair, hypospadias repair, circumcision, and operations on the legs.

It usually provides pain relief for about 6 – 8 hours, but this is variable.

What are the benefits of having a caudal block?

Your child will feel little or no pain after his operation. This reduces the need for strong medications which can have side effects like nausea and vomiting, feeling itchy, and making your child feel sleepy.

Are there any risks to my child having a caudal block?

Hundreds of thousands of caudal blocks have been performed around the world for several decades with an excellent safety record. Large studies have confirmed that caudal blocks are very safe.

Side effects include:

- Weak or heavy legs – this is the most common feeling and will wear off as the effect of the local anaesthetic wears off, usually about 3 to 12 hours. During this time your child should be supervised if they are walking or crawling. Be careful with hot baths as your child may not be able to sense the temperature in the same way as normal during this time.
- Inadequate pain relief – in some children the caudal block may not work. If this happens your child will be given other medicine to keep them comfortable.
- Difficulty passing urine – a small number of children might struggle to pass urine for a few hours before the effects of the block wear off. This may require the insertion of a catheter to empty their bladder.
- More serious complications like nerve damage, infection and bleeding are extremely rare (less than one in ten thousand patients) and monitored for.

If you have any other questions about your child's caudal block, please feel free to discuss them with your anaesthetist, who will be happy to discuss any concerns you may have.

June 2016