

# **Caudal Block**

A guide for parents and carers

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## **Introduction**

To make sure your child is comfortable, he/she will be given pain-relieving medicines during and after their surgery.

A caudal block is one way of doing this and this leaflet explains what is involved, the benefits, the risks and the alternatives.

## **What is a caudal block and how is it performed?**

Once your child is asleep, he/she will be turned on their side. The skin of their lower back is cleaned with an antiseptic solution and a pain-relieving medicine is injected at the base of their back. This provides pain relief during and after the operation.

## **Who will do the caudal block?**

A consultant paediatric anaesthetist will normally do the caudal block. This is a doctor who has undergone specialist training in providing anaesthesia and pain relief for children having surgery.

Alternatively a doctor who is training in paediatric anaesthesia may perform the caudal. This will be under the supervision of a consultant.

## **What pain-relieving medicines are used in a caudal block?**

We use local anaesthetic for the caudal block. It is similar to the 'freezing injection' used by dentists.

The local anaesthetic numbs the nerves that feel pain. If it works well, your child should be pain-free for up to six hours after the operation.

## **What are the benefits of a caudal block?**

By numbing the nerves that feel pain, we hope to avoid giving strong pain-relieving medicines intravenously during and after your child's operation.

These stronger medicines have side-effects, including itch, feeling sick and vomiting. They can also make your child quite sleepy.

## **What problems can occur with caudal blocks?**

About one in 20 caudal blocks may not work. We would then give your child pain relief through the cannula (plastic tube) in their hand.

It is normal for your child to have a tiny pin-prick mark on their back, where the caudal block went in.

The most common problem after a caudal block is slightly weak legs. Your child may be slightly unsteady on their feet and need help getting up and about (mobilising) initially after surgery. This usually wears off within one to two hours.

Delay in passing urine after the operation can happen. This is often related to fasting, more than the caudal itself.

### **Very rare problems include:**

- Infection at the site of insertion
- Local anaesthetic being injected into the bloodstream or the fluid around the spinal cord
- Nerve damage, which may be temporary or permanent.

Please ask your anaesthetist about any of the above if you are concerned. Over 15,000 caudal blocks are performed each year in the UK, and serious problems are very rare indeed.

### **Are there alternatives to a caudal block?**

Yes. We can give pain relief into your child's canula, as mentioned above. Also, depending on the type of operation your child is having, we can inject local anaesthetic around the site of the operation. Again, please ask your anaesthetist if you want to know more about these alternatives.

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