



# Caudal block

This information sheet from Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) explains about caudal blocks and why this might be suitable for your child.

**A caudal block is a pain-relieving injection at the base of the back which is done while your child is under general anaesthetic.**

A caudal block normally gives pain relief for 3 to 12 hours. It numbs the lower half of the body (from the belly button downwards) and so may be used for surgery on the lower tummy, groin or legs. A caudal block is combined with general anaesthesia so your child will still be asleep for their operation, but they will need lower doses of other painkillers.

## How is a caudal block performed?

After your child is asleep, they will be turned on their side and their lower back will be carefully cleaned. Under sterile conditions, the anaesthetist will insert a small needle into the base of the back and inject the painkillers. The needle is then removed.

## Is a caudal block safe?

Caudal blocks have been used regularly in children for more than 30 years and have an excellent safety record. Several large studies in the UK and abroad have confirmed that caudal blocks are very safe.

## Are there any side effects?

- **Failure** – in a small number of children it may not be possible to perform the caudal block or it may not work. In this case, your child will be given other painkillers to keep them comfortable.
- **Numbness or weakness** – for the 3 to 12 hour period that the caudal block is working your child may have numb, weak or tingling legs. You should supervise them closely if they are crawling or walking, and keep them away from anything hot or sharp as they will not feel pain in the same way as normal. They may also have difficulty passing urine, so a small number of children need a catheter into the bladder to help them pass urine. All of these effects will wear off as the block wears off.
- **Bleeding, infection or nerve damage** – As mentioned above, caudal blocks are safe and the risk of bleeding or nerve damage is extremely low. Infection is very unlikely as they are done under sterile conditions in an operating theatre.

## Are there any reasons my child shouldn't have a caudal block?

If your child has any abnormalities of their back or spine then you should tell the anaesthetist when he sees your child before their operation, as a caudal block might not be suitable for them.

If you have other questions or concerns then please discuss these with the anaesthetist looking after your child.