

# Intravenous regional anaesthesia (IVRA)

## The purpose of this handout is to explain:

1. Intravenous regional anaesthesia (IVRA)
2. The risks of IVRA
3. The signs to look for when you are at home

**Before being given procedural sedation we need your consent, so please read this document carefully.**

## Obtaining your consent for IVRA

Your doctor has recommended IVRA for your medical procedure. Before having IVRA, we need your consent so please read this document carefully. Your doctor will check that you have understood this information and answer any questions you may have. Before IVRA can be performed, you will be asked to provide information about your health history, medications and allergies. Make sure you tell us everything related to these questions.

## What is IVRA?

IVRA is a common and safe anaesthetic technique that allows a procedure to be done on your injured arm or leg without causing you pain. During IVRA, you are awake and only your injured arm or leg is put to sleep. It is a safe alternative to a general anaesthetic.

## How is IVRA performed?

The procedure takes about 30 minutes and is performed by an experienced doctor.

1. Your blood pressure and pulse will be checked and you will be monitored throughout the entire procedure
2. A small drip will be placed into your injured limb and another in your uninjured hand
3. A tourniquet (like a large blood pressure cuff) will be inflated on your injured limb to stop blood flow during IVRA. The cuff will feel very tight, but most people are able to tolerate this.
4. An anaesthetic will be injected through the drip into your injured limb. The affected limb will change colour and become pale, mottled and numb (do not worry – this is normal).
5. The medical procedure on your injured limb begins

6. On completion of the procedure, the cuff is deflated and the limb will flush red. There will be a sensation like pins and needles, and then feeling in your limb will return.
7. After the procedure, we will monitor you for any side effects

## Anaesthesia

A local anaesthetic (prilocaine) is usually all that is required. A sedation anaesthetic can also be used to help with any anxiety during the procedure. If the tight cuff becomes too painful, we can give you pain medicine.

## What are the risks?

IVRA is a safe procedure. Serious side effects are extremely rare and minor side effects occur only 1 to 2 per cent of the time. These might include:

- Pain at the site of the tourniquet – this is common but rarely interferes with the procedure and can be relieved with pain relief
- Bruising from the tourniquet – the skin under the tourniquet can develop temporary marks or bruising
- Inadequate pain control – this is rare. If the IVRA fails to control your pain, we would then use a different technique to perform the procedure. Your doctor would discuss this with you at the time.
- Allergic reaction to the anaesthetic – although very rare, this can occur
- Local anaesthetic toxicity – this is very rare but could cause mild symptoms such as tingling in the mouth and restlessness or more serious problems such as seizures and coma

## Recovery

Recovery is rapid. After completion of the medical procedure, we will monitor you for any side effects for 60 minutes. You will be offered pain medicine if the pain from your injury returns.

## Complications after IVRA

Most problems related to IVRA would have been noted before leaving the emergency department.

- Extreme pain in the affected limb which is not responding to your pain medicine
- Numbness or tingling in your injured limb

## PATIENT INFORMATION

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- Inability to move your fingers or toes due to severe pain or weakness
- Change in the colour of your injured limb

If you experience any of the above effects, seek immediate medical review by returning to Cabrini emergency department if safe to do so, or dial triple zero (000) for emergency care and transport.

### Seeking help

**Cabrini Emergency Department (ED)** is staffed by experienced emergency doctors and nurses 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. If you have any questions about your ED treatment our qualified ED staff can be contacted on **(03) 9508 1500** at any time. If you need to return to Cabrini ED for ongoing care we would be glad to take care of you again and if this occurs within a week of your initial consultation the doctor's fee will be bulk-billed.

You can also expect to receive a phone call or SMS message from one of our emergency nurses the day after you have been discharged. The nurse will be able to clarify any aspect of your diagnosis, treatment, or follow-up.

In a medical emergency return to Cabrini ED if it is safe to do so or go to the nearest hospital emergency department or call an ambulance – dial triple zero (000).

### Want to know more?

- Contact Cabrini ED on **(03) 9508 1500**
- Ask your local doctor or healthcare professional
- Visit the Better Health Channel at [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)