



**REGIONAL BLOCK EXPEDITES MOVEMENT,
LIMITS PAIN FOR MONTHS AFTER WRIST SURGERY**

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SAN FRANCISCO — Wrist surgery patients who received a regional anesthetic experienced less pain, and more quickly regained use of their hand and wrist, than those who were given general anesthesia.

Andrew D. Rosenberg, M.D., chair, department of anesthesiology, New York University Hospital for Joint Diseases, New York, New York, studied more than 200 patients of similar age, gender and socioeconomic status who either received a regional block anesthesia, which blocks sensation to and numbs the arm, or general anesthesia, in which the patient is totally anesthetized before wrist surgery.

Three months after surgery, the patients who had received a regional block had less pain and better movement of their wrist and hand than the patients who received general anesthesia.

There are several possible reasons for the improved outcome, Dr. Rosenberg said. “First, some physicians believe that if you block or numb nerves before surgery starts, you might prevent the release of certain inflammatory and pain chemicals that usually get released with injury.”

Another theory is that pain relief immediately after surgery (with a regional block) may provide overall and long-term benefits. And finally, regional anesthetic may block other nerve fibers in addition to those that signal pain from the arm to the brain, which can cause a lot of pain and swelling after surgery.

Regardless of the reason for the diminished pain and improved mobility, the results “are important to consider when deciding what type of anesthesia to have for repair of a wrist fracture,” Dr. Rosenberg said.

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