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DIGITAL NERVE BLOCK

Thank you for your excellent article on nerve blocks for the fingers.¹ I am a family physician who also works in a busy rural emergency department, and we need to perform this procedure quite often. I never knew alternatives to the ring block even existed!

I am interested in the web-space block given your positive review, and I have a few questions:

In the article, the photo shows the needle entering the web space between the index and middle fingers. Which finger is being blocked? Does it need to be done on the other side of the finger as well? Does it work for the thumb? How soon does it take effect (i.e., same as ring block)?

Would you use it on toes as well?

Finally, when would you use 1% lidocaine, and when would you use 2%?

Izak Van Niekerk, MD, MBA

REFERENCE

1. Kelly L. The occasional digital nerve block. *Can J Rural Med* 2016;21:51-2.

THE AUTHOR RESPONDS

Good questions. The block needs to be done on both sides of the finger (2 web spaces). It works well on toes also. Either 1% or 2% lidocaine would work. I got into the habit of using 1% with larger volumes (e.g., for a hematoma block), where adding more volume (say, in a second attempt) might lead to lidocaine toxicity, but in this application, you would be fine to use 2%.

Len Kelly, MD, MClinSci, FCFP, FRRM