

Lumbar Sympathetic Block

About your procedure

The lumbar sympathetic nerves extend from the lower-back (lumbar) part of your spinal cord. These nerves regulate blood flow to the lower extremities. A lumbar sympathetic block may be used for lower extremity pain caused by diabetes, nerve damage, phantom limb pain or other medical conditions. It may also be done to help diagnose certain medical conditions.

During the procedure, a needle is inserted into the lower back (outside of the spinal cord) and a local anesthetic is injected to numb the area. When the painful area is blocked, you may feel less pain. At this time you may see a physical therapist to help you move the involved area. Moving and exercising the involved area promotes the best healing and maintains strength and range of motion.

Before the procedure

- You may eat and drink as usual unless you have asked for sedation
- If you have asked for sedation, have nothing to eat or drink for 4 hours before the procedure except for sips of water with your medications.
- Your Pain Clinic physician will perform the procedure in a room with a type of X-ray machine called a fluoroscope.

During the procedure

- You will lie on your stomach.
- The area to be injected will be cleansed with an antiseptic solution.
- Your Pain Clinic physician will inject the area.

After the procedure

- You may spend 20 to 30 minutes resting quietly before you leave.
- You may experience these conditions lasting three to four hours:
 - Warmth, redness and absence of sweating on the extremity of the blocked side
 - Numbness, tingling or weakness on the blocked side
- You may experience these conditions during the first 24 hours:
 - Backache
 - Muscle spasms
 - Numbness at the area of injection
- Your injection site may feel sore for one to two days.
- You may develop a bruise at the injection site.

Complications

Complications related to the procedure are rare. They may include the following:

- Bleeding
- Headache
- Dizziness

Care following your procedure

- Rest the day of your procedure, and avoid strenuous activity. If you have questions about your activities, ask your physician or nurse.
- Do not drive for 24 hours after the procedure, if you have had sedation.
- You may shower, but do not use a bathtub, hot tub or whirlpool for two days.
- You may use an ice pack on the injection site for 20 minutes, three or four times during the first 24 hours.
- Do not use heating pads or any other form of continuous heat on the injection site for two days.
- Continue to take your usual medications, unless instructed otherwise.
- Watch your injection site for signs of infection. Call your physician or go to the emergency room if any of the following occur:
 - You have a fever (a temperature higher than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius).
 - Your injection site becomes red, swollen, tender or warm.
 - Fluid drains from the injection site.
 - The injection site has an odor.