

Stellate Ganglion Block

About your procedure

A stellate ganglion block may be recommended to treat pain in your upper extremities, head or neck. It may also be done to help diagnose certain medical conditions. During the procedure, a local anesthetic is injected into the front of the neck near the Adam's apple to numb the affected area. The injection is in the space outside the spinal cord space.

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

- Do not eat or drink for eight hours before the procedure, unless instructed otherwise.
- You may be asked to use the restroom.
- Your Pain Clinic physician will determine whether the procedure will be performed in the exam room or in a room with a type of X-ray machine called a fluoroscope.

During the procedure

- You will lie on your back. A pillow will be placed under your shoulders.
- The area to be injected will be cleansed with alcohol or an alcohol based solution.
- Your Pain Clinic physician will inject the area.

After the procedure

- You may spend 30 minutes resting quietly before you leave.
- You may experience any of these conditions, lasting three to four hours:
 - A drooping upper eyelid on the blocked side
 - A size difference in the pupils of your eyes
 - The sensation of a lump in your throat with some difficulty swallowing
 - Reddening of your face on the blocked side
 - Hoarseness and nasal congestion on the blocked side
 - Warmth and redness (without sweating) of the arm on the blocked side
- Your injection site may feel sore for one to two days.
- You may develop a bruise at the injection site.

Complications

Serious complications during the procedure are rare. They may include the following:

- Seizures
- Bleeding
- Difficulty breathing

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 eat solid food until the lump sensation in your throat goes away. You may drink small sips of fluids during this time. Call your physician if the sensation of a lump lasts longer than four hours after the procedure.
- Do not drive for three to four hours after the procedure (or until you have no remaining effects from the block that may interfere with your ability to drive).
- 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 (warm water during a brief shower or bath is fine).
- Continue to take your usual medications, unless instructed otherwise.
- Watch your injection site for signs of infection. Call your physician 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.