

Sympathetic Nerve Block

What is a Sympathetic Nerve Block?

- The sympathetic nerves are part of the autonomic nervous system. They control functions such as temperature, blood flow, sweating, heart rate, digestion, and blood pressure. They can also be involved in the sensation of pain in the arms and legs due to spasms of blood vessels, Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (AKA Reflex sympathetic dystrophy), Raynaud's syndrome, and chronic stomach pain.
- The goal of the sympathetic nerve block is to diagnosis sympathetically-mediated pain and to "reset" the sympathetic tone to normal regulation.
- A sympathetic nerve block involves injecting a local anesthetic around the sympathetic nerves in the neck (AKA Stellate Ganglion Block) or low back (AKA Lumbar sympathetic Nerve Block) under x-ray guidance. In doing so, the nerves are temporarily turned off which, in turn, can reduce or eliminate pain.
- The block may provide weeks or months of relief and may need to be repeated to provide prolonged relief.
- This injection is performed in conjunction with other treatment modalities, such as physical therapy, massage/soft tissue release, chiropractic treatment, acupuncture, and medications to help you attain the most amount of pain relief.

Risks of Injection:

- Sympathetic Nerve Blocks are generally very safe. However, there are potential risks associated with them:
 - Infection
 - Bleeding
 - Allergic Reaction
 - Nerve injury
 - A drop in blood pressure
 - Anesthetic toxicity

Prior to the injection:

- Blood thinners must be held prior to the injection to reduce the risk of bleeding. Please contact your prescribing physician for approval to stop these medications.
- Light sedation is offered for the procedure. You may not eat or drink 8 hours prior to your injection if you are receiving sedation.
- Notify your physician if you have had recent fevers, illnesses, or hospitalizations.

Injection Day and Afterwards:

- Please wear comfortable shoes and clothes. You will change into a gown at the center and lie on your back for a stellate ganglion block or face-down for a lumbar sympathetic nerve block.
- The injection takes approximately 15 minutes. Please allow 1-2 hours of time at the facility.



- Arrange for a driver to transfer you home from the facility as you may have had sedation and/or experience temporary numbness or weakness requiring assistance.
- You may notice increased warmth in the affected extremity up to 24 hours after the injection. You may have slight drooping of the eyelid, hoarseness, difficulty swallowing, or redness of the conjunctiva in the affected side with a stellate ganglion block.
- Rest for the remainder of the day following the injection. You may resume your normal activities the following day.
- You may resume Physical Therapy 2 days following the injection as tolerated.
- Please arrange for a follow-up visit in the office 1-2 weeks after your injection.