

STELLATE GANGLION BLOCK

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the stellate ganglion? A ganglion is a group of nerves. The stellate ganglion is an area of the neck where a group of nerves come together to control blood flow to the head and arms, and is sometimes involved in pain transmission from those areas.

What is the purpose of a stellate ganglion block (SGB)? The injection blocks the nerves of the stellate ganglion. The injection is both diagnostic as well as therapeutic, meaning that in addition to determining the cause of your pain, the block may treat the pain problem as well.

How long does the procedure take? The actual injection takes only about 15 min; however the total time you are at the hospital or other facility can be 3-5 hours.

What is actually injected? The injection usually consists of a local anesthetic and steroids.

Will the injection hurt? The procedure involves inserting a needle through skin and deeper tissues. There is some discomfort involved. However, the physician numbs the skin and deeper tissues with a local anesthetic using a very thin needle before inserting the actual block needle.

Will I be sedated for this procedure? Yes. This procedure is done under local anesthesia. Most of the patients also receive other medications which make the procedure easier to tolerate. The amount of sedation given generally depends upon patient tolerance.

How is the injection performed? You will lie with your head tilted back. Your neck will be cleansed with an antiseptic. The doctor, by using his sensation of touch and pressure, will guide the needle to the correct area and then inject the local anesthetic.

What should I expect after the injection? Immediately after the injection, you may feel your upper extremity getting warm. In addition, you may notice that your pain may be gone or quite less, this is due to the anesthetic. You may also notice "a lump in the throat" as well as hoarse voice, droopy and red eye, and some nasal congestion on the side of the injection. You may also develop a headache. These are all temporary and should not cause alarm.

What should I do after the procedure? You will need a ride home. We advise the patients to take it easy for a day or so after the procedure. Perform activities as tolerated.

Can I go to work the next day? You can to return to work the next day or the day after, as tolerated.

How long will the effect of the medication last? The local anesthetic wears off in a few hours. However, the blockade of sympathetic nerves may last for many more hours. Usually, the duration of relief gets longer after each injection.

How many injections do I need to have? If you respond to the first injection, you will be recommended for repeat injections. Usually, a series of such injections is needed to treat the problem.

What are the risks and side effects? As with any procedure there are risks, side effects, and possibility of complications. The most common thing you may feel is soreness in the neck at the injection site, this is temporary. For other risks please speak with a nurse in the office.

Note: This procedure cannot be performed if you have an active infection, flu, cold, fever, or very high blood pressure. Please make us aware of these conditions.

We hope this information helps.