

Radiofrequency Thermocoagulation of the Medial Branch Block

When your procedure has been cleared and scheduled you will be called to be reminded of the exact time and date that you are to appear at the surgical center.

We would like to remind you that you must have a driver with you and that you must not drive the day of your procedure or operate any heavy equipment. You must not eat or drink anything but water 4 hours prior to your procedure.

When you arrive at the surgical center, you will sign paperwork and then be interviewed by a nurse. The nurse will ask you about your medical conditions and the medications that you take. After she is finished with the interview, if necessary, you will be placed in a gown and an IV will be placed.

When it is time for you to have your injection, you will be transported into the procedure room where you will meet your doctor. Your doctor will ask you about how you are doing and will also verify the injection that you are scheduled for, including which side would be the appropriate side to inject if this is an issue. After this has been accomplished you will be helped onto a special cushioned table and positioned on your stomach. A monitor will be placed over your finger that will tell us about the oxygen that you have in your blood as well as your heart rate and EKG stickers will be applied to use so we can monitor your heart rhythm and heart rate.

PROCEDURE:

Initially, when we start this procedure, it is important that you are not heavily sedated since we will depend on you to respond to our questions to be sure that the special probe is close to the nerve we are trying to destroy.

After you are given a small amount of IV sedation, your back will be prepped and draped in the usual sterile manner for this procedure. Using x-ray a skin wheal will be raised in typically 3 areas of your back directly over the targets that we are trying to reach which are the nerves to the facet as they lie across small bones sticking out from the side in your lumbar area (transverse process, see diagram). The special probes will be directed down to their targets using x-ray visualization. Once the probes are in position, an electrode will be placed into each special probe and we will plug this into a generator. We will start with a very low current that we will pass through the electrode.

We will be asking you if you feel any gentle pressure or tingling in your back during this test. Clearly if you feel a small tingling when the voltage is very low it means the probe is very close to the nerve. If we need to use a higher voltage to get you to experience the tingling in your back we will need to move the needle into a closer position. You will either feel a tingling or slight pressure in your back or you will feel a tic or quick contraction of the muscle in your back. None of these sensations should be uncomfortable to you.

Once each probe is positioned as close to the nerve as possible, additional numbing medication will be injected through the probe and you will be given more IV sedation to make you comfortable.

Each lesion takes 1½-minutes.

If at any time you experience significant discomfort or discomfort in your leg you must tell us immediately.

Most patients tolerate this extremely well; they often rest through it and feel no discomfort whatsoever.

At the end of this procedure the electrode is removed from the probe and a small amount of numbing medication and steroid is injected through the probe to deal with any discomfort that you might have immediately after the procedure.

At the end of your procedure, the nurses assist you in getting off of the injection table and back into your recliner. They will wheel you out of the procedure room and into the postoperative area where equipment will again be placed on you to monitor your heart rate and the amount of oxygen in your blood. In the recovery room the nurses will observe how you are doing. As soon as you are able to safely drink something a nurse will provide you with some juice. You will be observed until you are able to be alert and able to stand and walk. Then you will be discharged.

Generally speaking, after you leave the surgical center, we do not limit your activities significantly other than to tell you that you should not drive or operate heavy machinery. If you feel well and you want to go out to lunch or go shopping this is certainly reasonable. Many people however who have been suffering with terrible pain often like to go home to sleep since they are comfortable and will sleep well.

Prior to discharge, you will be provided with an instruction sheet that will inform you of possible concerns after your injection. If you are frightened or think that you are having a reaction to the injection or medications, you should immediately call our office and speak with someone on staff who will assist you. In the event that you believe that there is a very serious side effect occurring you should call 911 and get immediate care.

This procedure sometimes results in people experiencing a certain amount of back pain where the needles were placed that occurs after a day or two and lasts approximately a week. The discomfort that you feel will not be the same as the pain that you had for which the procedure was done. This discomfort typically resolves in a week, after which, you should experience dramatic improvement of your pain. We will plan to see you one month after the procedure if you need to be seen. If you are otherwise perfectly well we will see you on an as needed basis.

