

Stellate Ganglion 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 you must not drive the day of your procedure or operate any heavy equipment. Additionally, 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.

If you wish to receive sedation, and many people do, it is at this point that we will start the sedation. Sedation is usually given slowly to be sure that you are not overly sedated. Many patients who do not take a lot of pain medications find that they fall asleep with the IV sedation. If this happens it is never a deep sleep and we can easily wake you up. The optimum level of sedation is one in which you are relaxed and breathing on your own.

In many patients who take significant amounts of pain medication the IV sedation will help you relax but it may not result in you being completely asleep. It is important to remember that IV sedation is used to relieve anxiety. None of the procedures that we do are significantly painful and generally speaking they are as uncomfortable to experience as simply getting the IV.

PROCEDURE:

When you are comfortable your neck will be prepped with Betadine and a drape placed over it on the same side as you are having your problem with your hand, arm or shoulder. The injection is performed to the side of the midline and under x-ray control a small needle will be placed into the skin to numb it up.

If this is your first Stellate Ganglion block, the IV sedation that is provided to you will be minimal. The reason for this is it is important to see if the procedure is helpful in the control of your arm or shoulder pain. If we gave you a lot of IV sedation, we would not know, if you felt better, whether this was due to the IV sedation or the block.

After the skin is anesthetized, a second needle is placed through the skin and directed to a target area near the C7 vertebra. With the needle resting on this vertebral body (see diagram), numbing medication is injected into this area which will affect the stellate ganglion which is the target of this procedure. The needle will be quickly removed and you will be placed in a sitting position.

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 recovery 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. When you are able to be alert, swallow, and are able to stand and walk, you will be discharged.

After the stellate ganglion block, one of the rare but possible side effects that you can experience is that you may lose your voice or have difficulty swallowing fluids. For this reason we typically wait 2 hours before we give you anything to eat or drink. Other side effects that can occur include blurred vision and a red eye on the side of the block. None of these side effects prove that the block was performed accurately. The only true proof of the block being performed accurately is that your arm and/or hand, on the same side that was blocked, should be substantially warmer than the other arm.

If this is your first stellate ganglion block, you will at this time be asked to evaluate whether you think the block has been helpful in decreasing the sensitivity you experience in the arm or the pain that you experienced with movement or touching the arm.

We ask you to carefully evaluate whether the stellate ganglion block is helpful in controlling some or most of your pain that you are experiencing. The first stellate ganglion block typically lasts only a day or two, when they are repeated in a series the benefit of the block typically extends to the point where you will no longer need the blocks. It is important to contact the Pain Center and let them know the effect of the block. If the block has been very helpful to you, we will repeat it. If it does not substantially decrease your pain, we will see you in the office to reevaluate you. 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.

