

Stellate Ganglion Block

WHAT IS IT?

A stellate ganglion block is an injection of anesthetic medication into the nerves of the stellate ganglion, which are in the front of your neck on either side of your trachea and esophagus. This procedure is not performed on both sides at one visit.

HOW WILL IT HELP ME?

The purpose of this procedure is to attain relief from pain in your head, neck, upper arm, or upper chest. The block is used to treat conditions such as complex regional pain syndrome (CRPS), shingles, phantom limb pain, PTSD, and Long Covid symptoms such as the loss of taste and smell.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT?

Upon arrival, you will meet with one of the healthcare professionals to discuss your medical history and to ask any questions you may have about the procedure.

You may elect to receive an IV sedative to help you relax. Most patients tolerate the injection very well. During the procedure, you will lie on your back. Once the area is sterilized, a local anesthetic is applied to the skin (it feels like a poke and a burn). After that, you most likely will only feel pressure. Your doctor then uses an X-ray to guide the placement of a very thin needle to the proper position. Once in place, your doctor then gradually injects the medication.

Following the procedure, you will rest in the recovery area. If sedated, you will need a responsible adult to accompany you home. After the injection, you may notice that your pain has lessened. You may also temporarily feel warmth in your arm, and/or experience a hoarse voice, a feeling of a lump in the neck, red or droopy eye, a stuffy nose on the side of the injection, or soreness in the neck at the injection site.

You may go for immediate physical therapy. Otherwise, you will perform activity as tolerated and should be able to return to work the next day, unless otherwise directed by your doctor.

Overall, the procedure is very safe. As with any procedure, there are risks. The most common side effect is pain, which is temporary. Any time the skin is punctured, there is a chance of bleeding or infection, though it is very rare. Other rare side effects include spinal headache, nerve damage, worsening of pain, etc., which are extremely unlikely.

HOW SOON WILL I FEEL RELIEF?

You may begin feeling relief immediately, though it may take longer to feel the full effects of the procedure. The lasting effect of the treatment differs with everyone, ranging from days to weeks. A series of injections are usually required for treatment with a progressive increase in relief with each injection.

