

Stellate Ganglion Block

What is a stellate ganglion block?

A stellate ganglion block is an interventional procedure that is designed to relieve pain in the head, neck and upper extremities by injecting local anesthetics around the sympathetic nerves in the cervical region. This pain may be caused by an imbalance in the sympathetic nervous system (sometimes called Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy or Chronic Regional Pain Syndrome) but can also be caused by such syndromes as post-herpetic neuralgia and other types of neuropathic pain.

With fluoroscopic guidance, a needle is advanced along the side of the cervical spine. Needle tip placement is confirmed by injection of contrast (dye) to verify proper needle location. After correct needle position is confirmed by x-ray (fluoroscopy) the proper medications are injected. The most common medications injected are Lidocaine, Marcaine and Kenalog.

How does a stellate ganglion block relieve my pain?

The sympathetic nerves run on the front side of the spinal column (not in the spinal canal with the nerves from the central nervous system). The sympathetic nerves are part of the autonomic nervous system, which is responsible for controlling things people do not have to think about or have direct control over. An imbalance in the sympathetic nervous system can be responsible for chronic pain in the head, neck or upper extremities. A stellate ganglion block uses local anesthetics that “turn off” the sympathetic nerves and sometimes can allow them to function normally.

What can I expect during the procedure?

After checking in at the Surgery Center, you will be interviewed by the admission nurse who will take a full history, then start an IV. You will also be seen by the medical staff of the Arizona Pain Clinic prior to the procedure, at which time you will have the opportunity to ask any additional questions.

After being placed on the treatment table, intravenous sedation will be administered to make the procedure as comfortable as possible. The injection usually takes only several minutes. Following the procedure, you will be allowed to rest for approximately 30 minutes in the recovery area prior to discharge. You must have a responsible adult take you home.

When will I begin to feel pain relief and how long will it last?

If a stellate ganglion block is going to be effective, the patient usually feels some relief of the symptoms within several hours of the injection. The length of pain reduction depends on multiple factors including the severity of the problem, how long it’s been present and the patient’s overall medical condition.

What is the anticipated recovery from the procedure?

Recovery from the procedure is short. You may have minor discomfort at the injection site which usually resolves within 24 hours. If you continue to have symptoms, please refer to Surgery Center discharge instructions. You also may call the Arizona Pain Clinic if there are any concerns.



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