

Peripheral Nerve Block

What is a Peripheral Nerve Block?

It is the administration of medications resulting in temporary loss of sensation and/or movement, as well as reduced pain in the area being targeted.

Why do I need this procedure?

Nerves supplying the area of concern carry information to the brain, which is perceived as pain.

Administration of medications around the nerve supplying these areas temporarily blocks the transmission of these signals, resulting in pain relief.



What are the preparations?

Your pain specialist will review your history and examine you prior to deciding if a stellate ganglion block is appropriate to address your pain.

Please provide your doctor with accurate and complete information regarding:

- Medical issues
- Current medications, especially blood thinners
- Allergies
- Previous procedures, and
- Pregnancy or possibility of pregnancy

Specific instructions regarding fasting and your medications will be given to you separately, and should be followed closely as this allows us to perform the procedure as safely as possible.

How is a Peripheral Nerve Block performed?

- Anaesthetic medication is administered through a needle placed near nerves supplying the painful area, usually with ultrasound guidance. You will usually be awake for the process, but some sedation (medication to reduce anxiety) might be administered if deemed appropriate
- There will be reduced pain, associated with numbness, and possibly weakness or loss of movement in the area of concern for a few hours to days after the injection
- A catheter (small hollow tube) might also be inserted to continue the medication over a few days



What are the risks and complications of the procedure?

Common side effects:

- Temporary numbness and/or paralysis of the area of the body for which the block has been performed



Uncommon side effects:

- Pain and bruising at the injection site
- Partial or failed block with inadequate pain relief



Rare but serious complications:

- Infection, bleeding, nerve damage resulting in prolonged or persistent weakness or numbness
- Seizures
- Allergy to medications such as local anaesthetics

What can I expect after the procedure?

You will be monitored for some time prior to discharge back home or to the ward. Your vital signs will be taken regularly and our nursing staff will discuss some post-procedure instructions with you.

Your doctor will review you after the procedure to assess its effectiveness and counsel you regarding further management.

A denervation or neurolysis procedure (more permanent block) might then be discussed as the next step where appropriate as this provides longer-term pain relief.

What are the other options?

Your pain specialist will discuss other therapeutic options to address your pain as indicated.

These may include medications, physiotherapy, psychological intervention, surgery, or a combination of any of these modalities.



Contributed by Department of Anaesthesia

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