

Trigeminal Nerve Block

What is a Trigeminal Nerve Block?

The trigeminal nerve is a major nerve that is responsible for transmitting the sensation of touch in your face. They also supply the muscles involved in biting, chewing and swallowing food. Irritation or inflammation of these nerves can result in facial pain.

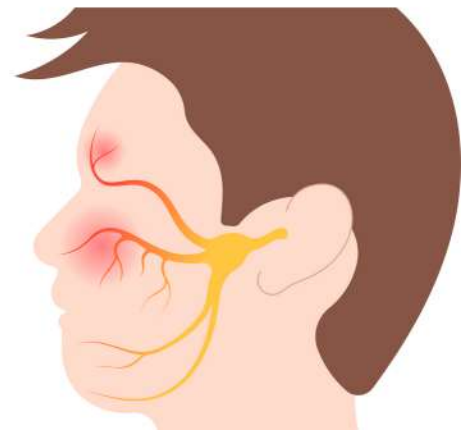
A trigeminal nerve block is an injection of medication that helps to numb the trigeminal nerve, so as to relieve facial pain.

Why do I need this procedure?

Trigeminal nerve blocks can help to relieve facial pain that has not responded well to other medications or therapies.

They are usually (but not exclusively) administered for the following conditions:

- Trigeminal neuralgia
- Herpes Zoster infection (post-herpetic neuralgia)
- Migraines
- Other atypical facial pain syndromes



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 Trigeminal Nerve Block performed?

- The trigeminal nerve block might be done under X-Ray or ultrasound guidance. You might also be given sedation to reduce your anxiety and discomfort associated with the procedure.
- The area of the face being injected will firstly be cleaned thoroughly with an anti-septic solution. Local anaesthetic will be injected under your skin to reduce the discomfort from the block needle.
- The block needle is then inserted in the appropriate location. If X-Ray is being used, the needle is guided to the appropriate location and contrast (dye that lights up under X-Ray) injected to confirm appropriate needle placement.
- Local anaesthetic (numbing medication), with or without corticosteroid (anti-inflammatory medication), is then injected near the trigeminal nerve, causing resultant numbness in the areas it supplies. You might require multiple injections to different areas of the face depending on your specific pain condition.

What are the risks and complications of the procedure?

Trigeminal Nerve Blocks are generally very safe, with a low risk of serious complications.

Common Side Effects:

- Facial numbness
- Difficulty chewing or swallowing due to muscle weakness
- Blurring of vision

These are temporary and should resolve within hours.



Rare but serious complications:

- Infection around the injection site
- Bleeding
- Damage to other surrounding nerves or structures
- Eye globe injury (for injections done near the eye)
- Facial artery vasospasm
- Severe drug allergies
- Local anaesthetic toxicity
- Seizures

What can I expect after the procedure?

- You will be monitored 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.
- If you are being discharged home, you should be accompanied home by a responsible adult and you must not drive home by yourself.
- Some numbness and soreness is expected at the site of injection initially, but should improve.
- Keep the injection area clean and dry for the next 2-3 days.
- Most people experience some pain relief initially, but the full effect might only be apparent after 3-5 days. The benefit of the block varies between patients.
- Your doctor will review you after the procedure to assess its effectiveness and counsel you regarding further management, which might involve a denervation (permanent block) of the trigeminal nerve for more long-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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