

Sympathetic Nerve Block

What are sympathetic nerves?

- Sympathetic nerves are part of the autonomic nervous system. They are located in the front of your spine.
- Sympathetic nerves control sweating, heart rate, blood vessels, pupil dilation, movement of food through the intestines, and many other body functions.

Why would this injection be helpful?

- A sympathetic nerve block involves injecting medicine around the sympathetic nerves. By doing this, the system is temporarily blocked in hopes of reducing pain and/or improving blood flow to your legs and feet.
- Your provider may recommend this procedure for a condition such as complex regional pain syndrome (CRPS) or phantom pain.

Risks and side effects?

- Your provider will discuss risks and side effects with you at the time the procedure is ordered.
- Common short term side effects may occur including numbness, weakness, or increased pain.
- Your leg/foot may feel weak or numb for a few hours following the procedure.

What happens during the procedure?

- You must arrive 30 minutes prior to your scheduled appt. The nurses will ask you medical questions, have you sign your consent, and review your medications.
- You will lay on your stomach for the procedure.
- The nurse will monitor your vital signs throughout your procedure.
- Skin temperature monitors will be placed on both of your feet.
- Your skin will be washed with an antiseptic solution.
- Your provider will direct a needle into your back area near the spine. This is done under x-ray guidance. A small amount of contrast (dye) is injected to ensure proper needle position. Local Anesthetic (numbing) medication is then injected into the area.

What happens after the procedure?

- You will go to the recovery room for monitoring until discharge criteria is met.
- Be careful standing, especially if you have weakness in your leg.
- Duration of relief is variable. It is important to keep track of the amount of relief you have and how long it lasts.
- Follow your discharge instructions.
- A nurse will call you the next business day after your procedure to check on you further and discuss your relief.