

Patient Guidelines

SYMPATHETIC BLOCK (celiac plexus, lumbar sympathetic, superior hypogastric)

Should I limit my activity or change my diet after the injection?

No. Unless your doctor tells you otherwise, you may return to your usual activities and resume your normal diet immediately after the injection.

Are there any side effects caused by a sympathetic block?

- **FOR DIABETIC PATIENTS:** It is important for you to know that if you have diabetes, the steroid can cause elevation in your blood sugar level for up to 2 weeks after the injection. If you have diabetes and regularly check your own blood sugar, you should check your blood sugar more often during the first several days after an epidural steroid injection. Please talk with the doctor who helps to manage your diabetes for instructions in how to change your diet and/or diabetes medication if your blood sugar is elevated.
- The most common side effect is pain at the site of injection.
- The back or legs may feel weak or numb for a few hours after the procedure. This is not an emergency.
- Serious bleeding or infections following the procedure are very rare. Serious nerve injury is extremely rare.
- You may feel a drop in blood pressure or a change in temperature of the skin on the leg.
- You may experience an increase in bowel movements.

Are there any restrictions after a sympathetic block?

Yes. You should follow these restrictions:

- Do not drive for the remainder of the day
- Do not take a tub bath or soak in water (i.e. pool, hot tub) for 24 hours after the procedure
- Allow 3 days post-procedure before resuming physical therapy

What are the medications used for a sympathetic block?

- Lidocaine or bupivacaine are local anesthetics which are used to numb the area of injection; this numbness usually wears off within 2 - 6 hours
- Lopamidol, an X-ray contrast agent, may be injected into the area to confirm correct placement under the ribs
- Dexamethasone, or another steroid that helps with inflammation and pain, is usually used as well

When should I call my doctor?

You should call us immediately if any of the following occur:

- If you experience any swelling, redness, bleeding or discharge from the site of the injection
- If you have a fever greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit
- If you experience new or worsening back or neck pain
- If you experience a new numbness or weakness in your arms or legs
- If you experience any chest pain or shortness of breath or persistent cough.



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How can I reach a nurse or doctor from the Center?

To reach a nurse, please call 949-824-7246 and leave a message on the nursing line. Your call will be returned within 12 business hours.

There is a doctor on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for Urgent Issues, who can be reached as follows:

- DURING OFFICE HOURS (Monday thru Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.), please call 949-824-7246 and leave a message for the physician on the nurses' line
- AFTER HOURS AND ON WEEKENDS, please call 714-456-7890 and ask the hospital operator to page the physician on call for the Chronic Pain Service Pager 3386