



Procedure Overview

OCCIPITAL NERVE BLOCK

What is an occipital nerve block?

Many patients with chronic headaches over a specific area of the head may have a condition called occipital neuralgia, or irritation of the occipital nerve. This nerve is located near the base of the skull. Chronic irritation or inflammation of this nerve can result in chronic headaches. An occipital nerve block can help with this pain. A small amount of local anesthetic and steroid is injected around this nerve.

What is the goal of an occipital nerve block?

The goal is to provide pain relief so that you are able to resume normal activities. The steroid helps to decrease inflammation in the specific location where it is most needed. It helps avoid the potential side effects of taking a steroid or other medication by mouth where it can then spread to other areas of the body where it may not be needed. The steroid may help the nerve heal by reducing inflammation. It may provide permanent relief or a period of a few weeks/months of relief while the nerve is healing.

What happens before treatment?

You will be escorted to a room where a nurse will conduct a pre-procedure interview. The physician who will perform the injection will review your medical history, previous imaging studies, physical exam and current medications to help plan the best approach for the injection.

What happens during the procedure?

The patient remains awake during the entire process. The procedure is done with you sitting in a chair or on the edge of the stretcher. We start by cleaning your neck with alcohol. A small needle is inserted into the scalp and the medication is injected. The entire procedure is typically only 2-3 minutes long.