



Procedure Overview

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

What is a sympathetic block?

Certain nerves run on the front surface of the spinal column. These nerves are involved with many bodily functions that people don't consciously think about or have direct control over (such as digesting food). Sometimes a problem with these nerves can contribute to arm or leg pain or pain in the abdomen or pelvis. A sympathetic nerve block involves injecting medication around these nerves in the back. Depending on the area of your pain, the injection may have a different specific name.

What is the goal of a sympathetic block?

The goal is to provide pain relief so that you are able to resume normal activities. In many cases, we will prescribe a course of physical therapy to help you return to a normal level of activity.

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. Blood pressure, heart rate and breathing are continually monitored. Lying face down on the procedure table, the injection site is cleansed with an antiseptic. This procedure involves inserting a needle through the skin, muscle and soft tissues, so there is some slight discomfort involved. An injection of local anesthetic (numbing medication) will be administered in the area where you are experiencing pain. The physician then directs a needle with the use of X-ray guidance and deposits the medication. This procedure takes approximately 30 minutes.