



Cryoanalgesia

What to expect from your procedure

This handout explains cryoanalgesia. This is a procedure that “freezes” the nerve that is causing your pain.

You will need to keep track of your pain symptoms after your procedure and call the clinic to report your results in 4 weeks.

What is cryoanalgesia?

Cryoanalgesia is a way to provide long-term pain relief by “freezing” the nerve that is causing your pain. To do this, extreme cold is applied directly to the affected nerve. The nerve will be frozen to make the area feel numb.

How is it done?

The doctor will use a local anesthetic to numb the skin where a probe will be inserted. The doctor then uses X-ray or ultrasound to place the probe close to the affected nerve. The tip of the probe then gets very cold, killing the nerve, but leaving the *insulation* (protection around the nerve) so that the nerve can grow back. The area will burn for about 30 seconds and then will become numb.

You may receive light sedation for this procedure, but you will stay awake so that you can talk with the doctor and answer questions during the procedure.

What results can I expect?

During the first days or weeks after the procedure, you might have more pain and/or numbness. This should ease over time. Even though we expect complete pain relief, relief from 50% to 80% of your pain is a good outcome. As many as 80% of patients (8 out of 10) who have this procedure have some relief.

Pain relief from the procedure may last for 8 to 24 months. But, because nerves usually grow back, your pain could return. If your pain returns after this time, the procedure may need to be done again.

What if the procedure does not help my pain?

Cryoanalgesia does not work for everyone. If the procedure does not help your pain, your doctor will talk with you about other treatment options during your follow-up visit at the Center for Pain Relief.

Side Effects

There is a risk for side effects with any medical procedure. Talk with your doctor about side effects before having any treatment.

Possible side effects from cryoanalgesia are:

- Pain at the injection site.
- Infection.
- Bleeding.
- Nerve injury.
- Allergic reaction.
- A burning feeling where the nerve was treated.
- Bruising around the treatment site.
- More pain and/or numbness, which may last for several weeks.
- Dizziness and unsteady walking if nerves in your neck were treated. This usually lasts for several hours.

How long does it take?

The procedure takes about 45 minutes, but plan to spend 2 hours at the clinic from the time you are admitted until you leave.

How to Prepare for Cryoanalgesia

Medicine Changes

You must stop taking blood-thinning medicines such as warfarin (Coumadin), clopidogrel (Plavix), enoxaparin (Lovenox), and others before having cryoanalgesia. If you are taking blood-thinning medicine, talk with your doctor who prescribed the medicine as soon as you have scheduled the procedure.

You may keep taking low-dose aspirin and anti-inflammatory medicines.

On the Day of the Procedure

Note: You may eat and drink as usual if you will **not** receive sedation.

For all patients:

- Arrive at the clinic at least 30 minutes before your appointment.
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing.
- Do not wear jewelry.
- Wear underwear made of only cotton.
- It is best to bring someone with you who can drive you home.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help.

Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.:

Call the Center for Pain Relief at 206-598-4282.

After hours and on weekends and holidays:

Call 206-598-6190 and ask for the Pain Fellow on call to be paged.

- **If your blood pressure is high and not well-controlled, your procedure may need to be scheduled for another time.**

If you will be receiving sedation:

- You **must** bring someone with you who can drive you home after the procedure.
- Starting 8 hours before your appointment:
 - **Do not** eat any solid food.
 - For the first 4 hours, you may drink only clear liquids.
 - For the 4 hours before your appointment, do **not** drink anything.
 - If you need to take any medicines during this time, take them with only a small sip of water.

We will not be able to give you sedation if you do not follow these diet guidelines.

- **If you will be receiving sedation and you have diabetes**, you must also ask your diabetes care provider how to manage your medicines the morning of your procedure since you will be fasting.

When can I resume my usual activities?

- If you had sedation, do **not** drive or use machinery for 24 hours after your procedure.
- If you have pain relief after your procedure, do **not** start doing all the activities you have not been able to do because of your pain. Remember, you still have the underlying problem that caused your pain. If you overdo it, your pain may return quickly, even within a few days of feeling better.
- It is important to do an exercise program that slowly strengthens the muscles you have not been able to use because of your pain. It will take time to build up your strength.

Follow-up

Before you go home after having cryoanalgesia, you will receive the *Patient Self-Reported 4-Week Pain Diary*. Take this form home and fill it out, then call the Center for Pain Relief 4 weeks after the procedure to report your results.

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