



# Diagnostic Nerve Block

*What to expect from your procedure*

**This handout explains diagnostic nerve block. This is a test to find out if a certain nerve is causing your pain.**

**You will need to keep track of your pain symptoms after your procedure.**

## **What is diagnostic nerve block?**

This procedure is a *diagnostic* test. This means it is done to find, or diagnose, a condition. A diagnostic nerve block is done to find out if a certain nerve is causing your pain.

To do this test, an *anesthetic* (numbing medicine) is injected around the nerve. The anesthetic lasts only a short time. You will monitor and write down your pain levels for several hours. Please ignore any feelings of numbness you may have. We want to know what effect this test has on your pain.

## **How is it done?**

The doctor will use local anesthetic to numb the skin where the needle will be inserted. The doctor then uses X-ray or ultrasound to guide the needle to the correct nerve. When the needle is inserted, you may feel tingling or a deep ache. You will tell the doctor when this happens.

To make sure the injection is done in the right place, the doctor will ask you questions at certain times during the procedure. When the doctor is sure the needle is in the right place, the anesthetic medicine is injected. You may feel some discomfort, tingling, or pressure from the injection.

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

## **How long does it take?**

The procedure takes about 15 minutes, but plan to spend 1 or 2 hours at the clinic from the time you are admitted until you leave.

## **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 diagnostic nerve block are:

- Pain at the injection site.
- Infection.
- Bleeding.
- Nerve injury.
- Allergic reaction.

## **How to Prepare for Diagnostic Nerve Block**

### *Medicine Changes*

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

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

### *On the Day of the Procedure*

For the test to be accurate, you must come to the appointment with your usual level of pain. This means your pain must be greater than 5 on the 0 to 10 pain scale (0 = no pain, 5 = moderate pain, and 10 = very strong pain).

**If you do not have pain on the day of your appointment:**

Call the clinic at 206-598-4282 as soon as possible. Your appointment may need to be scheduled for another time.

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

### **For all patients:**

- Wear loose, comfortable clothing.
- Arrive at least 30 minutes before your appointment.
- It is best to bring someone with you who can drive you home.
- If you are on a long-acting or slow-release pain medicine, your pain doctor may tell you how to reduce your medicine to prepare for the test.
- Do **not** take any short-acting pain medicine such as oxycodone/acetaminophen (Percocet), acetaminophen (Tylenol), or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) the day of your procedure.

## 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.

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- **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.
- You must try to do activities that would usually bring on your pain.
- Do **not** lie down and rest after the procedure.

## Follow-up

You will go home with the *Patient Self-Reported 6-Hour Pain Diary*. You will use this to write down your pain levels for 6 hours right after your procedure.

- If your pain returns during this time, write this in your pain diary.
- If your pain relief lasts longer than the first 6 hours after your procedure, write this in your pain diary every 4 or 5 hours until the pain returns. You do not need to remain active and stay awake if this happens.

You **must** call the clinic as instructed in the pain diary to report your results. **Your follow-up appointment will not be scheduled until you have made this call.**

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON  
**MEDICAL CENTER**  
UW Medicine

### Center for Pain Relief

Box 354692  
4225 Roosevelt Way N.E., Suite 401  
Seattle, WA 98105  
206-598-4282