



# Selective Nerve Root Block

*What to expect from your procedure*

This handout explains **selective nerve root block**, a procedure to find out if a certain nerve in your spine is causing your pain.

You will need to keep a diary of your pain symptoms after your procedure.

## What is selective nerve root block?

Selective nerve root block is done to find out if a specific nerve in your spine is causing your pain. An *anesthetic* (numbing medicine) is injected around the nerve root in this minimally invasive procedure. Sometimes a steroid is also injected to lessen inflammation and ease 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 to locate the specific spinal nerve root. A needle is inserted into the area next to this nerve. You may feel tingling or a deep ache when the needle is placed close to the nerve. You will tell the doctor when this happens. X-ray contrast dye is injected to make sure the needle is in the right place, and then the medicine is injected. You may feel some discomfort, tingling, or pressure during injection.

To make sure the injection is in the right place, the doctor will ask you questions at certain times during the procedure. You may receive a light sedation for this procedure, but you will stay awake so that you can talk with the doctor.

## How long does it take?

The procedure takes about 15 minutes. But, plan to spend 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 selective nerve root block are:

- Pain at the injection site.
- Infection.
- Bleeding.
- Nerve injury.
- Allergic reaction.
- Headache.
- Inability to pass urine.
- Worse pain than before the procedure.

## **How to Prepare for Selective Nerve Root Block**

### *Medicine Changes*

**You must stop taking blood-thinning medicines such as warfarin (Coumadin), clopidogrel (Plavix), enoxaparin (Lovenox), and others before having selective nerve root block.** If you take any blood-thinning medicine, talk with your doctor who prescribed the medicine as soon as you are scheduled for this 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.
- 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 before 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.
- **If your blood pressure is high and not well-controlled, we may need to schedule your procedure for another time.**

## 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 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 your procedure, you will receive the *Patient Self-Reported Pain Diary*. Follow the instructions in the diary, then call **206-598-2442** 1 week after the procedure to report your results.

You **must** call the clinic after a week to report your results. **Your follow-up appointment will not be scheduled until you have made this call.**

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