

Lumbar Sympathetic Nerve Block

A lumbar sympathetic nerve block is a specialized test used to diagnose and treat pain in your leg or foot. It can be done on either the right or left side of the body. Sympathetic nerves control sweating, heart rate, blood vessels, pupil dilatation, movement of food through the intestines, and many other body functions. Sometimes the sympathetic nerves do not function correctly and cause pain. The purpose of this nerve block is to find out if your sympathetic nerves in your back are causing your leg or foot pain. The procedure is a diagnostic test. Learning more about the cause of your pain can help your doctor decide on the best treatment for you.

Getting Ready for the Procedure:

1. Do NOT eat solids for 6 hours prior to your procedure or drink liquids 2 hours prior to your procedure. You may take a sip of water if you need to take medicine.
2. Take your usual medicines on the day of the procedure unless instructed otherwise by your doctor.
3. 2 weeks before the procedure:
 - You will need to stop taking aspirin (including baby aspirin). If you take aspirin for your heart or blood vessels as prescribed by your doctor, you will need a written note from your doctor saying it is ok to stop taking your aspirin.
 - If you take Plavix(clopidogrel), you will need to stop taking it. You will need a written note from your doctor saying it is ok to stop taking your Plavix.
4. 3 days before the procedure:
 - You must stop taking anti-inflammatory medicines. Examples of anti-inflammatory medicines are: Advil, ibuprofen, edotolac, indomethacin, naproxen, Aleve, Feldene, diclofenac, Mobic, and piroxicam. You do not need to stop taking Celebrex, Vioxx, or Bextra. If you are unsure if any of your medicines are anti-inflammatory medicines, ask your doctor.
 - You cannot take herbal medicines, fish oil, or Vitamin E.
5. Call your family doctor for instructions if you take blood thinners such as heparin or coumadin(Warfarin). Your blood clotting times will need to be normalized(INR less than 1.4) before your procedure if you take blood thinners.
6. Call your family doctor for instructions if you take medicine for diabetes. This procedure may temporarily increase your blood sugar if you have diabetes.
7. If you have glaucoma, this procedure could worsen your glaucoma. Please discuss this with your eye doctor to see if this procedure is safe for you.
8. Before the procedure, tell us if you have any drug allergies or if you have had a reaction to X-ray dyes (contrast dyes), iodine, betadine, seafood, shellfish, latex or local anesthetics (numbing medicine).

9. Make sure someone is able to drive you home. You can NOT drive yourself home after receiving sedative medications.
10. Bring your pain medicines with you to the hospital. Make sure you have enough pain medicine for after the procedure. You may still need to take it. The doctor who performs your injection will NOT give you a prescription for pain medicine to take home.
11. Bring the latest version of any MRI or CT scans if these were not performed at UW Hospital or Research Park Clinic. You are responsible for getting and bringing your films. If you do not bring these films with you on the day of your procedure, your procedure cannot be done. If you have had any spine surgery in the past, you need to bring an MRI or CT scan that was done after your surgery. If are unsure where or when your MRI or CT scan was done, call your doctor. If your scan was done at UW Hospital or Research Park Clinic, you do not need to bring your films.
12. You must be healthy on the day of the procedure. For two weeks before the procedure:
 - You must be free of infection, not taking antibiotics
 - You must not have cold or flu symptoms
 - You must not have any rashes
 - You must not have a fever greater than 100.4 F
15. If you are feeling sick or have a cold before the procedure, call the team to let us know. Please try to call 24 hours or more before the procedure.
16. Call Joyce at (608) 444-7421, Maureen at (608) 262-0350, or Cindy at (608) 265-1729 if you need to cancel your procedure or have any questions regarding your procedure.

What to Expect:

The test is performed in an operating room equipped with an X-ray machine. Before the test, you will change into a hospital gown and an IV will be started in your arm. A sedative medication will be given through the IV to make the procedure as easy as possible. However, you will remain awake throughout the test.

You will lie on the X-ray table on your stomach. We will watch your blood pressure, heart rate, and oxygen levels throughout the procedure. Your back will be thoroughly cleaned. Then, your back will be covered with a sterile drape. Using the X-ray machine, your doctor will carefully guide a thin needle into your back near the spine. Your doctor will inject some X-ray(contrast) dye through the needle to make sure it is in the right place. X-rays will be taken. Then local anesthetic (numbing medicine) will be injected. During the test, you will be asked to lie very still. The test usually takes 30 to 45 minutes.

During and after the test, your doctor will monitor the temperature of your big toes on both feet. This is done using a small sensor on your toe. The sensor will stay on for approximately 30 minutes.

Recovery:

When the test is over, you will go to the recovery room where nurses and your doctor will watch you for 30 to 60 minutes.

Your driver will take you home. Sometimes your referring doctor will advise you to go to physical therapy following the test.

Some patients have discomfort in the groin area on the side of the procedure.

You can expect some soreness at the injection site for the next 2-4 days.

You should limit your activities for the first 24 hours to those that you can do without pain.

You will be given a pain log to complete for the next 14 days. This will let us know if and how much your pain was decreased. **If you do not fill out and send back your pain log, we cannot do more procedures/tests on you.**

You may have changes in the sensation, color, or temperature of your legs for several hours after the test. Please note any changes on the pain log because this information is very important to your referring doctor.

You should continue to take your routine medicines.

Contact your referring doctor's office to make an appointment to discuss the results of this test. Your doctor will get a report of the procedure.

If you have any unusual problems related to this procedure or if you develop new symptoms after the injections or any signs of infection, please call Joyce at (608) 444-7421, Maureen at (608) 262-0350, or Cindy at (608) 265-1729.

Signs of infection:

- Fever greater than 100.4 F by mouth for 2 consecutive readings 4 hours apart
- Increased redness, swelling around the injection site
- Any drainage from the injection site