



Pain Specialists of Charleston, P.A.

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Lumbar Sympathetic Block Information

Why was this procedure performed?

A lumbar sympathetic block is used to help diagnose and treat different types of neuropathic (nerve injury or irritation) pain in your legs or feet. This pain is usually burning and you may have sensitivity to any type of light touch. The lumbar sympathetic ganglia are small bundles of nerves in your back. The nerves in the lumbar sympathetic ganglia are called sympathetic nerves and problems with these nerves will often cause the burning pain and sensitivity in your leg or foot. A lumbar sympathetic block temporarily turns these nerves off. You may receive a repeat lumbar sympathetic block if the first was helpful.

How is the procedure performed?

You will receive an intravenous line (IV) for safety reasons and also to give you medications to relax you or “take the edge off”. A very small needle is inserted into your lower back near the spine on the affected side. More than one needle may be used. The needle will be inserted under x-ray as this helps guide the needle to the correct position. When the needle is in the right position, local anesthetic will be injected into the lumbar sympathetic ganglia to “turn off” the nerves. After your procedure, the nurses in the recovery room will watch you closely.

What can you expect after the procedure?

After the lumbar sympathetic block is performed you will notice certain symptoms that may be present for up to 8-12 hours. You may notice increased warmth and redness of the leg and foot. Rarely, you may have some numbness or weakness of the leg or foot. Again, these symptoms are only temporary and will go away in time. Since these symptoms are present and since you have likely had sedation, you will need a ride home. You will need to avoid the following activities until these sensations have passed: walking, climbing, driving and any exertion.

Most importantly, we want to know if your pain is improved and to what extent. It is not uncommon to have complete pain relief, only partial relief or no relief at all. You will be asked to keep a pain diary to help you keep track of the level of pain you experience after your procedure. We will discuss this at your next visit.

What if you have worrisome side effects or other concerns?

You may experience a small amount of bruising, bleeding or swelling at the injection sight. It is best to apply ice compresses in the first 24 hours followed by heat after 24 hours in short durations, usually 20 minutes at a time. Please continue your regular medications. If you are experiencing other difficulties or side effects, please call our office so that we may recommend further action or please go to the nearest emergency room for evaluation.