



Pain Specialists of Charleston, P.A.

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Stellate Ganglion Block Information

Why was this procedure performed?

A stellate ganglion block is used to help diagnose and treat different types of neuropathic (nerve injury or irritation) pain in your arm or hand. This pain is usually burning and you may have sensitivity to any type of light touch. The stellate ganglion is a small bundle of nerves in your neck. The nerves in the stellate ganglion are called sympathetic nerves and problems with these nerves will often cause burning pain and sensitivity in your arm or hand. A stellate ganglion block temporarily turns these nerves off. It is very common to receive more than one stellate ganglion block if it continues to be effective in relieving your pain.

How is the procedure performed?

You will receive an intravenous line (IV) for safety reasons and also to possibly give you medications to relax you or “take the edge off”. A very small needle is inserted at the base of your neck, often under the x-ray guidance. When the needle is in the right position, local anesthetic will be injected onto the stellate ganglion to “turn off” the nerves. After your procedure, the nurses in the recovery area will watch you closely.

What can you expect after the procedure?

After the stellate ganglion is blocked, you will notice certain symptoms that may be present for up to 8-12 hours. You may notice a droopy eyelid, redness of the eye, stuffiness of the nose, fullness in the throat, hoarseness and a warm sensation of the arm. Rarely, you may have some numbness or weakness of the arm or hand. 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: excessive talking, eating (including hard candy), smoking and driving.

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. This will be discussed 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.
