



# Pain Specialists of Charleston, P.A.

**Edward M. Tavel Jr, MD**

2791 Tricom Street, Suite 102 & 103, Charleston, SC 29406

Phone: (843) 818-1181 Fax: (843) 818-1145

## Transforaminal Selective Nerve Root Block Injections

### **What is a nerve root block?**

A nerve root block is an injection of a local anesthetic and sometimes a steroid under the directed vision of an x-ray machine (C-Arm) into the areas where the nerve root block (injection) follows the path of a single nerve to block pain emitted into an arm, leg or back. A nerve root block may be used by your physician to diagnose (try to determine from which level in your spine the pain is coming) and provide therapeutic relief at this level with medication.

#### ***One of three things may occur:***

1. The pain does not go away. The pain is not coming from the nerve at that level of the injection. This provides the physician with information about which levels are not causing the pain and to help them locate the specific areas which are causing your pain.
2. The pain goes away and stays away for a few hours but the original pain comes back and doesn't get better. The block was of **diagnostic value**. The pain is probably coming from the nerve at the level of the injection, but the steroid was not of benefit to you.
3. The pain goes away after the block, but may return later. The pain is reduced over the next several days. The block was of **therapeutic value** and has had a long lasting effect on treating your pain.

### **What are the risks of the procedure?**

There is always a risk of bleeding, infection, nerve injury or an allergic reaction to any of the medications used during the injection. These risks are present but their probability of occurring are fairly low.

Risks and short term side effects may occur and should be reported to your physician. You can expect some numbness that follows the path of the nerve that the physician blocked. You may have some weakness and increased pain for a few days after the injection, including localized pain at the injection site. If you are a diabetic, your blood sugar may be elevated after the procedure for a short time. Continue to closely monitor your sugars. Report any loss of control with the blood sugar levels to the physician who diagnoses and treats your diabetes immediately.

### **Will the injection hurt?**

The most uncomfortable part of the injection is the stinging and burning of the medication used to numb the skin. Every person's response to the injection is individual. Most patients will receive an intravenous injection of Versed which may help them relax during the injection process and may feel a sharp burning sensation in the arm where their IV needle has been placed. This sensation is temporary and will go away in minutes. Your physician performing the nerve root block will need to know if you experience pain during the injection of medications. The physician will inquire if the sensation is similar to "your pain".

### **How is the procedure actually performed?**

The physician will have you position yourself on the procedure table with your head at the top of the table and your feet at the bottom. You will be on your stomach and asked to tell the nurse where the pillows need to be positioned to make you comfortable as possible. It is normal to feel anxious at this time. Be assured the nurse will help you relax by explaining what will happen next. Your blood pressure, heart rate and breathing will be monitored at all times during the procedure. The physician will then tell you that the medication will be injected into your IV and that it will burn. Gradually you will relax. The physician will cleanse your injection site with iodine solution or/other antiseptic if you have an allergy to topical iodine. The x-ray machine will then be positioned over the location to be injected and the physician will take an x-ray of your body at the injection level. The procedure only takes a few minutes. At the end of the injection(s), you will be asked to move yourself on to a stretcher or wheelchair to be taken to the recovery room. You will be offered something to drink.

### **What restrictions will I have on the day of the procedure?**

You should not drive for the remainder of the day after your procedure. A responsible adult should accompany you to your home. This person should be available to you during the remainder of the day should you need assistance. The procedure will be cancelled if you do not have a responsible adult with you. This is the facility policy and it was written for your safety.