

## **Lumbar Sympathetic Block**

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### **What is Lumbar Sympathetic block?**

The sympathetic nerves are a group of nerves found along the front side of the spinal column. They are part of the autonomic nervous system and control many functions including: sweating, heart rate, digestion, and blood pressure. Sometimes these nerves continue to transmit pain following an injury even after the injury has healed. This may result in a condition known as Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS), also known as Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy (RSD). Symptoms of CRPS include: severe burning pain, swelling, and skin color changes.

Lumbar sympathetic nerve block is a diagnostic test to help your physician find the cause of your symptoms. It may also reduce your pain.

### **How is the procedure done?**

You will be lying on an X-ray table on your stomach. Blood pressure, heart rate and breathing are monitored. The injection area is cleansed with an antiseptic soap and the injection site is numbed. The location of the sympathetic chain is identified using fluoroscopy (X-ray). Your physician will insert a small needle through the skin and tissues and advance the needle until it is close to the sympathetic chain. A small amount of contrast is injected to confirm needle placement. Once confirmed, medication (local anesthetic) is injected and the needle is removed.

### **How long does pain relief last?**

If effective, pain relief will be noticed immediately. Relief may last hours or days. Your physician may recommend a series of these blocks 1-2 weeks apart or other options such as spinal cord stimulation for long term pain relief.

### **What are the side effects and complications?**

Complications are uncommon. Potential complications include:

- Allergic reaction to medication
- Infection
- Bleeding
- Spinal block
- Injection of medication into a blood vessel

### **How should I prepare myself for this procedure?**

- A driver is required to give you a ride home after the procedure.
- If you are on any blood thinners, please call the clinic at 701-551-6980 to receive instructions about your medication.

### **When should I call my doctor?**

You should call us immediately if any of the following occur:

- If you experience any swelling, redness, or drainage from the site of the injection
- If you have a fever greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit
- If you experience new or worsening pain
- If you experience a new numbness or weakness