

# Stellate Ganglion Block



## Why use this treatment?

A Stellate Ganglion Block is an injection of local anesthetic into the sympathetic nerve tissue - the nerves which are a part of Sympathetic Nervous System. These nerves are located on the either side of the voice box, in the neck. This injection can be used to block pain from the sympathetic nerves.

Stellate ganglion blocks are used for:

- Diagnosis and/or treatment of Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy (RSD) or Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS)
- Herpes Zoster (shingles) that involves an arm or the head and face.

## How does a stellate ganglion block work?

A stellate ganglion block works by actually blocking the action of the sympathetic nerves. Successful treatment will result in a reduction of pain and swelling, an increase in blood flow to the arm, and may allow patients to move their arm more easily. Patients who get treatment early during their illness tend to respond better than those who have this treatment after having symptoms longer than six months. Patients in the advanced stages of disease may not respond to treatment at all. If you respond to the first injection, the doctor may recommend repeat injections. Usually, a series of such injections is needed to treat the problem. Some patients may need only 2 to 4 and some may need more than 10. The response to such injections varies from patient to patient.

## How is the procedure done?

You will be placed on an x-ray table and the skin of your throat will be cleansed and prepared. You will be given a sedative and a local anesthetic is given to numb the area. The physician uses an x-ray machine (fluoroscopy) to locate the area where the stellate ganglion is found. A needle is then inserted and an anesthetic is injected into the area.

## What are the risks?

This procedure is safe. However, with any procedure there are risks, side effects, and the possibility of complications. The most common side effect is pain - which is temporary. Other risks involve bleeding, infection, spinal block, epidural block, and injection into blood vessels and surrounding organs. Other uncommon risks, include voice box injury and pneumothorax (e.g. lung collapse). While extremely rare, as with any invasive procedure, the risks of paralysis and death are possible.

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### After your procedure:

Immediately after the injection, you may notice increased warmth and redness of the painful arm. Often, patients may also be hoarse and feel like they have a "lump in the throat". Often there is redness in the eye on the side of the injection, with drooping of the eyelid and constriction of the pupil which can last for 4 to 8 hours after the injection. Pain relief may be noticed immediately, but the duration of relief often varies. It is important that you assess your pain relief over the first three to four hours after the injection and report this to the doctor. Your pain may return and you may have some soreness at the injection site for several days. You may notice some pain relief initially, but it may take up to 14 days to receive the full effect of the injection.

You were given a number of medications during your procedure, including sedatives and a local anesthetic. Any of these medications can sometimes cause temporary drowsiness, forgetfulness, numbness, weakness or soreness. For your safety, it is important that you:

- Rest for a few hours after the procedure. Walk with assistance as long as you are having any weakness or drowsiness.
- Do not drive or operate heavy machinery or power tools for at least 12 hours.
- Do not make any important decisions for 12–24 hours after the procedure.
- Resume your regular activity slowly. Do not overdo!
- To prevent accidental choking, do not eat or drink anything for at least 4 hours after a stellate ganglion block, then you can resume your regular diet.
- Use ice packs at the injection site for the next 24 hours. Don't leave the ice on for longer than 20 minutes at a time.

### Notify us if:

- There is a major change in pain level or if your pain pattern is different. Remember, your pain may be much better immediately after the injection, but it will be at least two days before you notice significant pain relief.
- You develop chills or a fever over 101<sup>0</sup>F in the next 3 days.
- There is any abnormal bleeding or drainage from the injection site.
- Please call the office during business hours whenever possible.
- You can reach the answering service at (616) 776-9643 after office hours.
- Report to the nearest emergency room if you are unable to contact Javery Pain Institute.

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Patient Signature

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Date

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Clinical Witness

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Date