

Our office will obtain preauthorization from your insurance company as needed. If you required a **REFERRAL** for your office visit, **you may also require one for your visit at the Surgery Center, please check with your Primary Care Doctor.**

You may have financial responsibilities such as a co-pay or co-insurance payment. It is your responsibility to contact your insurance carrier. They will need a code for your procedure to determine your costs. Your procedure codes/s are _____.

For What Reasons Should I Call the Office?

- A temperature of 100 degrees or more
- Excruciating pain
- Loss of bowel or bladder control
- Loss of motor function in arms or legs
- Headache in the standing or sitting position, which is fully relieved by lying down

Who Should I Call if There is a Problem?

- **Weekdays, 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. 908-782-0600 x 3210.**
- **Evening and Weekends, 908-782-0600, our answering service will direct you to the on call physician.**

Follow-Up

You will receive a phone call 10-12 days following your procedure, unless you are advised to make a follow-up appointment.



Guide to Spinal Injection Procedures



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What is a Spinal Injection?

The spinal injection you will have is also known as a block. Following your evaluation, a determination will be made using objective findings, such as our physical examination, test results (EMG, lab work), and radiology studies (X-Ray, MRI, CT Scan, Bone Scan) as well as subjective information (the actual symptoms and pain you are experiencing). We then decide whether to do an injection and, if it is to be done, which specific block you should get.

The injection is performed under x-ray guidance, also known as fluoroscopy. This enables the physician to visualize your spine to ensure accurate needle placement. The benefits of having the injection done under x-ray guidance are, reduced risk of complication and improved chances of positive results. This information is determined by comparing this approach to blind injections (without x-ray guidance). Published reports have shown that blind injections deposit medication in the wrong place 25-40% of the time.

What Medication Do I Get During the Procedure?

Generally there are substances injected during the block procedure. They are local anesthetic (to numb the area), contrast agent or dye (to outline the structures in your spine) and steroid (the medication used to reduce inflammation and decrease your pain). You should report any known allergy to one of these substances to a clinical staff member immediately. If the allergy is to the contrast agent, or if you have a reaction to seafood, shellfish, or iodine, you will require an allergy preparation prior to your injection. A member of the clinical staff will supply you with a prescription and explain how the medication should be taken.

Are There Different Types of Injections?

All of the injections fall under two general categories: **diagnostic block**, (test injections where only a contrast agent and local anesthetic are used) and **therapeutic blocks** (where a contrast agent, local anesthetic, and steroid are used). A **diagnostic block** is required when the source of your pain has not been clearly identified. It is a test used to determine which spinal structure is causing your symptoms. In order to be effective, the diagnostic injection must be performed while you are experiencing your usual amount of discomfort. If you are pain-free the day of your scheduled appointment, please cancel and reschedule. PLEASE DO NOT TAKE YOUR PAIN MEDICATION THIS DAY. During the procedure, the local anesthetic will be injected at the site most likely to be causing your pain. Shortly thereafter, you will be reassessed to determine whether the local anesthetic has relieved your pain. It is important to remember diagnostic blocks are tests. They are not intended to cure your problem. Once the local anesthetic has worn off (within one hour) your usual symptoms will return and sometimes there may be a temporary flare of your usual symptoms.

You may require one or more diagnostic blocks. The number of diagnostic blocks is determined by your response immediately following your injection. If you have a positive response (you were significantly relieved of pain immediately following the injection), you will then receive therapeutic injections. If you do not have pain relief, another diagnostic block is typically required.

Therapeutic injections differ from diagnostic injections in only one way. In addition to a local anesthetic and a contrast agent, a therapeutic block utilizes a steroid. The steroids used in these injections do not build muscles; they are not the kind of medicine the body builders and athletes take. The purpose of the steroid is to reduce inflammation, thereby decreasing pain. The therapeutic injection will not give you immediate relief of your symptoms.

The steroid effect begins anywhere from 4 to 6 hours to one week after your block. It provides gradual but steady relief of your symptoms. It is not a “quick fix”.

What Can I Expect?

The most common side effect of the procedure is a transient increase in pain for the first 24-72 hours after the injection. This typically occurs because the substances injected are placed in an area where there is already inflammation. You should not be alarmed by this. Your symptoms should gradually diminish in the days following the block.

There may also be some tenderness at the needle insertion site. Should you experience this problem, you can place an ice pack on the area to reduce the discomfort, as often as you require.

The above side effects are not a reason to cancel your subsequent injections. Your injections should be cancelled if you have 90-100% symptom relief, on a consistent basis, which lasts up to the day prior to your next block. You should then call our office to determine whether your block should be cancelled.

The expected success rate for these injections depends on your diagnosis. You should be aware that the procedure might be ineffective. It should also be noted that the duration of the procedures effectiveness is unpredictable.

Can All Spine Problems Be Treated by a Block?

The injections we perform are not appropriate for everyone. It is conceivable your condition cannot be treated with non-surgical measures. If this applies to your situation, surgery may then be recommended. Likewise, if there are not medical remedies for your condition, you will be apprised of that opinion at the time of your initial evaluation.

Should I do Anything to Prepare for the Procedure?

If your procedure is scheduled in the morning, you should have a light breakfast such as toast and cereal, nothing heavy.

Those patients scheduled for afternoon procedures should eat a normal breakfast (i.e. cereal, toast, etc.) and a light lunch, such as a sandwich and soup. You should not have any caffeine or product containing caffeine. You may take your regularly scheduled medications, however, there are some exceptions. **HOLD ANY ANTICOAGULANT, SUCH AS COUMADIN, HEPARIN, PLAVIX OR LOVENOX, FOR THREE DAYS PRIOR TO YOUR PROCEDURE.** Hold glucophage the day of the procedure and hold all oral anti-inflammatories (except celebrex & tylenol). If you are having a test injection, hold your pain medication. Please call if you have any questions or concerns.

What Are the Potential Complications?

As with any invasive procedure, there are possible complications you may experience. These include: allergic reaction, infection, excessive bleeding, paralysis, light headedness, permanent nerve damage, dural puncture, seizure, cardiovascular collapse, headache, fainting and death. A recent review of 888 blocks during a 6-month interval, demonstrated 8 short-term and no long-term complications. If you have any additional questions about the potential risk factors, any member of our clinical staff will be happy to discuss them with you.