

Stellate Ganglion Block Information

1. 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.

Please note: This procedure cannot be performed if you have an active infection (and are on antibiotics), flu, fever, extremely high blood pressure, or if you are on blood thinners (e.g., aspirin, Coumadin, Plavix, Pletal). Blood thinners must be stopped five to seven days prior to the procedure. For your safety, please inform us if any of these conditions exists.

2. What happens during the procedure?

When you enter the clinic, you will be taken into an admission room where a nurse will check your vitals. Please wear loose-fitting clothing and note that you may be asked to change into a hospital gown. After your vitals are taken, an IV will be placed so that you can receive sedation during the procedure. Once you have been escorted to the procedure room, our nursing staff will then position you on narrow table. The site of the procedure will be cleaned with iodine and sterilely draped. Once sterilized, the physician will numb your skin with a small needle – the numbing process may sting. Do your best to lay still and let us know if we are causing you discomfort.

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. Your skin will be cleaned and a Band-Aid may be applied. The Band-Aid may be removed the next morning.

3. What happens 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.

4. For what reasons should I call Pain Specialists of Columbia after the injection?

You should call us immediately at 803-252-4900 if you experience any of the following:

- Severe back pain that is not relieved with medication and ice
- Prolonged, new numbness or weakness of your legs
- Signs of infection in the area of injection

NOTE: If you experience loss of bladder and/or bowels control OR difficulty breathing, please go to the nearest emergency room immediately.

Pain Specialists of Columbia is committed to quality healthcare.
If you have questions about our policies, please see a Pain Specialists of Columbia representative.

If you are interested in learning more about our practice or treatment solutions,
please visit www.PainColumbiaSC.com