

### Sympathetic Block (also known as Paravertebral Sympathetic Block)

<b><i>What is it?</i></b>	A sympathetic block involves injecting local anesthetic (numbing medication) around the sympathetic nerves in the neck or low back. The sympathetic nerves are located on the front surface of the spinal column (not in the spinal canal with the nerves from the central nervous system). The sympathetic nerves are part of the autonomic (involuntary) nervous system, which controls things people do not have to think about or have direct control over. A fluoroscope (x-ray machine) assists the physician in locating the chain of nerves that supply the affected area.
<b><i>Why is it done?</i></b>	Sometimes arm or leg pain is caused by a malfunction of the autonomic nervous system after an injury. The purpose of these injections is to rule out or treat the pain associated with the sympathetic nervous system (complex regional pain syndrome or CRPS, which is also known as reflex sympathetic dystrophy or RSD). A sympathetic nerve block temporarily interrupts nerve impulses in order to reduce or eliminate pain. Depending on the severity of the condition, a series of injections may be required.
<b><i>How is it done?</i></b>	Prior to the start of the procedure an intravenous (IV) catheter (tube) is placed in your vein. When you are in the procedure room, you will be asked to lie face down on a cushioned x-ray table. A small needle is used to inject a local anesthetic (numbing medication) to numb the skin. This may sting for a few seconds. Next, a thin, long needle is placed in the side of the back and advanced to the front of the spinal column under direct fluoroscopy (x-ray). A small amount of dye may be injected to confirm correct location of the needle tip. The x-ray table may need to be tilted to view the location of the needle tip. After placement of one to two needles, a solution of local anesthetic is injected, which will spread up and down the front of the spinal column where the sympathetic nerves are located. After the needle(s) are removed, a small band-aid is applied.
<b><i>Is there any preparation?</i></b>	You may choose to receive conscious sedation. Conscious sedation is medication given through an intravenous (IV) catheter (tube) placed in your arm prior to the procedure. The medication will help you relax, but it will not put you to sleep. If you opt to have conscious sedation, you <b>MUST NOT EAT OR DRINK</b> for <b>4</b> hours before your procedure. However, you may take your medication with a <b><u>small sip of water.</u></b>
<b><i>What to wear?</i></b>	Please wear loose, comfortable clothing. Please leave all jewelry and other valuables at home.
<b><i>How long does it take?</i></b>	We ask that you arrive 30 - 45 minutes before the scheduled time of your procedure. The procedure lasts about 15 - 30 minutes. You will be in the recovery area about 15 minutes.
<b><i>Risks</i></b>	<p>The risks of this procedure include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Pain in the area where the needle(s) was (were) inserted. The pain can last for two to three days, and can be treated by using ice and mild analgesics (pain medication) such as Motrin, Naprosyn or Tylenol.</li> <li>* A reaction to the local anesthetic or dye. These reactions usually do not require further treatment. However, a reaction to the contrast dye may result in sneezing, hives, swelling of the face and throat, respiratory difficulties and shock. Medication and/or respiratory assistance may be required.</li> <li>* Temporary numbness or weakness in your arms or legs, depending on the location of the injection: This is normal. You should have assistance with walking and should not drive for 24 hours after the procedure</li> <li>* Bleeding in the area of the injection</li> <li>* Infection in the area of the injection</li> <li>* Increased pain</li> <li>* Nerve damage, stroke, paralysis and even death.</li> </ul>