

## **Selective Nerve Root Block Injections & Transforaminal Epidural Injection**

- **What is a nerve root block?**

A nerve root block (NRB) is an injection of local anesthetic and steroid injected under x-ray guidance into the area where the nerve exits the spinal column. A NRB is usually ordered by your doctor for pain in the arm or leg that follows the path of a single nerve.

A NRB may be diagnostic (trying to determine at which site the pain is coming from) and / or therapeutic (to produce pain relief). One of three things may happen. 1) The pain does not go away – which means that the pain is probably not coming from the nerve at the level of the injection – this has diagnostic value and means that the physician may need to try the procedure again at a different level. 2) The pain goes away and stays away for a few hours but the original pain comes back and doesn't get better again. This would mean the block was also of diagnostic value – the pain is probably coming from the nerve at the level of the injection, but the steroid was not of benefit. 3) The pain goes away after the block, the pain may come back later that day, but then the pain gets better again over the next few days. This means that the block was of therapeutic value – the steroid had a long lasting effect on the pain.

If you get good, lasting benefit from the injection, the block may be repeated. Sometimes your surgeon will ask that the block be done to help identify whether or not surgery might be helpful and at what level the surgery might be most helpful.

- **What are the risks of the procedure?**

As with most procedures there is a remote risk of bleeding, infection, nerve injury, or allergic reaction to the medications used.

Some short-term side effects may occur. You should get some numbness that follows the path of the nerve that was blocked. You may get some weakness as well. You may have increased pain for a few days after the injection, including localized pain at the injection site. Diabetics may have short-term elevation of blood sugars.

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- **Will the injection hurt a lot?**

Most people say the stinging / burning of the numbing medicine is the most uncomfortable part of the procedure though every person's response to any procedure is individual. "As the injection is right near a nerve it is possible to get a temporary "electric-shock" sensation.

- **What happens during the actual procedure?**

The procedure is done under fluoroscopy (x-ray) with you lying on your stomach. The back is cleansed with an antiseptic soap and sterile drapes are placed. The skin is anesthetized (numbed) with a local anesthetic. This is felt as a stinging or burning sensation. Using x-ray guidance, the needle is advanced to the proper location. A dye may be injected at this point. Local anesthetic and steroid are then injected through the needle and the needle is removed. Your skin will be cleansed and a bandage will be applied.

- **Will I have any restrictions on the day of the procedure?**

**You may not drive for the remainder of the day after your procedure. An adult must be present to drive you home or to go with you in a taxi or on public transportation. The procedure may be cancelled if you don't have a responsible adult with you! This is for your safety.**

No heat is to be used in the injected area for the remainder of the day.