



## **Lumbar Sympathetic block/Neurolysis**

### **What is a Lumbar Sympathetic block?**

Lumbar Sympathetic blocks are injections of pain medication that help relieve lower extremity pain, commonly due to RSD or complex regional pain syndromes, herpes zoster (shingles), sympathetic maintained pain because of vascular insufficiency and phantom limb pain.

The lumbar plexus is a bundle of nerves are near your hip joint, blocking these nerves from carrying pain information can help you stop feeling pain in your lower extremities.

### **How is a Lumbar Sympathetic block done?**

First, you'll be given an intravenous medication to relax you. Then, you'll lie on your stomach on an x-ray table.

The doctor will numb an area of skin on your back with a local anesthetic. Then, guided by an x-ray, he or she will:

- Insert a thin needle into your back, next to your spine, and inject anesthetic
- Insert a second needle on the other side of your spine
- Inject dye to confirm that medication will go to the correct spot
- Inject pain medication, such as epinephrine, clonidine or steroid; alcohol or phenol also may be injected to destroy the nerves

Usually, the procedure takes less than 30 minutes, and you can go home the same day.

### **How effective is a Lumbar Sympathetic block?**

How long the pain relief lasts is different for each person. For some, Lumbar Sympathetic blocks can relieve pain for weeks. For others, the relief can last years. Many can return to their normal activities.

Usually people need a series of injections to continue the pain relief. Sometimes it takes only two injections; sometimes it takes more injections.

### **What are the risks?**

The risk of complication from a Lumbar Sympathetic block is very low. However, there could be bruising or soreness at the injection site. Serious complications, including infection, nerve damage and bleeding, are uncommon. Side effects can include low blood pressure.

### **What happens after the procedure?**

Your lower extremity may feel warm or “different,” and you may begin to feel less leg pain. Your leg may feel numb or weak, but this feeling will subside when the anesthetic wears off.

You can continue your regular diet and medications immediately, but do not drive or do any rigorous activity for 24 hours after the procedure. Take it easy. You can return to your normal activities the next day.

The nerve block may last several days, but it may last longer with each repeat injection.

Do not drive or perform any vigorous activity for 12-24 hours after the procedure. You can return to normal activities the following day. You will be able to resume your normal diet and medications. Your physician will schedule your follow up appointment.

### **Is a Lumbar Sympathetic block right for you?**

A Lumbar Sympathetic may be right for you if you have complex region pain syndromes, phantom limb pain, pain from shingles, vascular insufficiency in the lower extremities which does not respond to other pain medication. There’s a better chance of a block relieving your pain if you have the procedure earlier in your illness. Talk to your physician about your symptoms and he/she will help decide what is right for you.