



Pudendal nerve block

What is a pudendal nerve block?

The pudendal nerve supplies the feeling for the lower pelvic floor and the external genitalia. This nerve can be injured by trauma or can become entrapped or painful from a variety of conditions, including bicycle riding, childbirth, and other conditions that cause pelvic floor tension. Pain in this nerve can be quite distressing. It can be felt as pain in the pelvic floor, upper inner thigh, or external genitalia including a condition called vulvodynia, which is pain on the outside of the vagina. A pudendal nerve block can help relieve pain in these areas. It can also serve as a valuable diagnostic tool to help determine the exact location of your pain. Your pain management doctor can evaluate your symptoms and decide if this procedure may be right for you.

How is the procedure performed?

A pudendal nerve block is done as a quick outpatient procedure, typically in an ambulatory surgery center using x-ray, otherwise known as fluoroscopy. Prior to the procedure, an IV will be started to provide light sedation during the procedure. You will be positioned lying on your stomach with blankets covering you while the area just surrounding the area for the block is cleaned an aseptic solution. Your physician will the identify the location of the pudendal nerve using fluoroscopy. Once the anatomy is visualized, your physician will inject a small amount of local anesthetic to numb the skin at the entry point. Once numb, your physician will direct a small needle to the area of the pudendal nerve. Next, specialized testing is performed to identify the pudendal nerve. After confirming a good position, a small amount of dye is injected to ensure the medication will be in the correct location. Finally, a solution of local anesthetic alone or mixed with steroid is injected through this same needle. This procedure is done at each level that is painful. The procedure generally takes 10-15 minutes. Because the pudendal nerve controls your sphincter muscles, this procedure cannot be done on both sides on the same day. Typically, the procedures are spaced out by 1-2 weeks to ensure full recovery of function from the local anesthetic from the first injection.

How effective is a pudendal nerve block?

A pudendal nerve block can be over 85% effective in diagnosing pain coming from the pudendal nerve. Almost half of patients do see at least some lasting benefit from a pudendal nerve block. If you do not see lasting benefit, your physician can discuss other procedures targeting this nerve

that can be an option. Even if the procedure does not provide lasting pain relief, that still serves as valuable diagnostic information that is helpful your physician to help guide your treatment.

What risks are involved with a pudendal nerve block?

A medial branch block is a low risk procedure. The injection site is away from most major blood vessels and the structures of the spine. Risks include bleeding, infection, damage to the nerve or surrounding structures, allergic reaction to medications, lack of pain relief, and soreness after the procedure. There is also a risk of temporary numbness in your leg following this procedure due to medications spreading to the sciatic nerve.

What happens after a pudendal nerve block?

You may notice some numbness on your skin in the area of the pudendal nerve on the side on which the procedure was performed. This is normal and temporary, generally lasting less than 24 hours. This will not affect the function your sphincter muscles. 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 pudendal nerve block right for me?

If you have chronic pelvic floor or groin pain, a pudendal nerve block may benefit you. Talk to your physician about your symptoms and he or she will help decide what is right for you.