



## **Stellate Ganglion Block**

### **What is a stellate ganglion block?**

A stellate ganglion block is a procedure done to help relieve pain in the face, neck, chest wall, or arm that can arise from surgery, trauma, or other nerve pain such as shingles. It may also help improve blood flow to the arm and hand.

A stellate ganglion block is used to diagnose or treat circulation problems or nerve injuries, including:

- Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy
- Complex Regional Pain Syndrome type I or II
- Shingles
- Phantom Limb Pain
- Raynaud's disease
- Refractory angina

Your pain management doctor can evaluate your symptoms and decide if this procedure may be right for you.

### **How is the procedure performed?**

Generally, the procedure is performed using x-ray imaging, or fluoroscopy but can sometimes be performed under ultrasound in the physician's office. You will be lying on your back with blankets covering you while the area for the block is cleaned with an antiseptic. Using the x-ray, the cervical spine is visualized. Your physician will use a local anesthetic or numbing medication to numb the skin. Once your skin is numb, the physician will direct a small needle towards the front of your cervical spine until bone is contacted. A radioactive dye will then be injected to ensure the needle is in the correct location and not inside a blood vessel. A local anesthetic will then be injected to block the targeted group of nerves. The procedure usually takes 10 minutes.

### **How effective is a stellate ganglion block?**

Due to the numbing medication injected, sometimes several hours of pain relief can be obtained immediately after the procedure. Other patients have longer term relief that outlasts the duration of the local anesthetic which may allow them to reduce the use of pain medication and increase

their participation in physical therapy. Most people need a series of injections to continue the pain relief.

### **What risks are involved with a stellate ganglion block?**

A stellate ganglion block is a fairly low risk procedure and may be followed by a day of mild soreness at the injection site. However, there are always potential risk when placing a needle in the body. These include bleeding, infection, nerve injury, allergic reaction, seizure or lung puncture but these are exceedingly rare.

Side effects include:

- Droopy eyelids
- Red eyes
- Tearing
- Hoarseness
- Nasal stuffiness

### **What happens after a stellate ganglion block?**

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 stellate ganglion block right for me?**

A stellate ganglion block may be right for you if you have nerve pain in the face, neck, arm or upper chest that does not respond to other treatment modalities. Talk to your physician about your symptoms and he/she will help decide what is right for you.