

INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR PROCEDURE

CELIAC PLEXUS BLOCK

How we do the procedure

A celiac plexus block is done by inserting a small needle in the upper lumbar region (just beneath the rib cage in the back) to block the sympathetic nerves responsible for pain sensation in the upper abdominal organs (liver, pancreas, stomach, and gall bladder). Chronic abdominal pain may be caused by chronic inflammation from adhesions (scar tissue) from prior surgery, from conditions such as pancreatitis or hepatitis, or cancer. You will be lying face down on the procedure table with a pillow under your abdomen. Your back will be cleansed with betadine and a sterile drape will cover the area. We will inject the skin with local anesthetic to make you more comfortable during the procedure. An x-ray (fluoroscopy) machine will be used to guide needle placement. With a small needle, we will inject local anesthetic solution around the sympathetic nerves at the level of the 1st lumbar vertebra. We believe that blocking these nerves will significantly decrease your pain.

We will usually perform a diagnostic or temporary block to see if your pain gets better. If this works but only provides temporary relief, we will discuss repeating the temporary block, or considering a more permanent (neurolytic or destructive) block as a long-term solution. The neurolytic block is done in the same way as the temporary one, but instead we will cauterize the nerves (radiofrequency ablation) or inject alcohol or phenol (chemical sympathectomy) to destroy the sympathetic nerves.

What to expect

We will start an intravenous line so that we can give you intravenous fluids, and medication to relax you. Your vital signs will be monitored, since it is possible that your blood pressure may go up or down slightly after the block. Blocking these nerves should make your pain a lot better. These effects usually last at least as long as the local anesthetic works to block the nerves, typically a few hours, but may occasionally last for days or weeks. You should not feel any numbness or weakness with the block.

Risks

The risks include bleeding, infection and a reaction to any of the medications used for the procedure. We use sterile technique to avoid infections. **If you are taking a "blood thinner" (anticoagulant), we will give you special instructions before the procedure to avoid excess bleeding.**

Safety Precautions

Please do not arise from lying or sitting suddenly, as your blood pressure may be affected for a few hours by

the block and this may cause you to be lightheaded.

Please be careful when walking if you have any weakness in your legs.

Since your ability to drive may be impaired for a few hours, we ask that you have someone drive you home.