

## INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR PROCEDURE

# INTERCOSTAL NERVE BLOCK

### **H**ow we do the procedure

An **intercostal nerve block** can be performed under any rib on either side to decrease the pain from a rib fracture, post shingles pain (postherpetic neuralgia), or a neuralgia (nerve irritation) from chest surgery, especially a thoracotomy. A small needle is inserted just beneath the rib and advanced a slight distance to where the intercostal nerve resides. Once in position, typically a long-acting steroid (NOT the kind that increases muscle size in athletes) and a local anesthetic agent are injected into the space where they can bathe the nerve and decrease the cause of your pain.

### **W**hat to expect

You may notice a numb area on your chest or abdomen. Once the local anesthetic has worn off, typically after several hours, your pain may return. The steroid will start working in 1-5 days to reduce inflammation. Depending on your response, we may repeat the injection in two weeks. If no substantial effects are obtained after one or two injections, we will discuss other alternatives

### **R**isks

The risks include infection and a reaction to any of the medications used for the procedure. We use sterile technique to avoid infections.

A rare possibility is a collapsed lung if the needle pierces the lining of the lung. If this happens, you may need to have a chest tube placed for a few days to re-inflate the lung. If you develop any significant problems, please call us immediately so that we may recommend appropriate actions or go to the emergency room for evaluation. Severe cough, difficulty breathing or talking, severe chest or shoulder pain, and shortness of breath are symptoms which could represent a partial lung collapse. If they should occur, go the emergency room for an x-ray to check for a partial collapsed lung.

### **S**afety Precautions

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

Injected steroids occasionally cause nervousness, difficulty sleeping, a flushed feeling (like hot flashes), an increased appetite, an elevated blood sugar, or a "moon face" (rounded face) for several days. (Steroids are used occasionally for this procedure.)