



MEDIAL BRANCH BLOCK INFORMATION

FOR PATIENTS OF CENTER FOR SPORTS

MEDICINE AND ORTHOPAEDICS

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This procedure will likely only provide about 6 hours of pain relief. The MOST IMPORTANT instruction is to monitor your pain for the next 6 hours. If the procedure does not last more than 6 hours, that does not mean that the procedure failed, as this is expected.

What is a medial branch block?: This is a **diagnostic** injection to see if numbing the nerves that cause joint pain in your lower back is helpful. This involves placing a needle for each nerve, usually 6 needles but up to 8 total. It is **diagnostic and will likely only last 6 hours**.

It is insurance mandated that this be performed TWICE prior to doing a longer lasting procedure called a radiofrequency ablation, which involves using different needles that burn a section of the nerve away. The effects of this procedure typically lasts about a year or more but can be repeated without doing the blocks in the future (every 6-24 months). **Do not go through with the radiofrequency ablation if the medial branch block is not helpful.**

How is this performed (steps)?:

- 1) The patient gets on the exam table (on your stomach)
- 2) The back is cleaned with antiseptic medication
- 3) An x-ray machine is used to identify the correct places
- 4) A small needle is advanced to the correct position at each location on one side
- 5) The local anesthetic is administered
- 6) The needles are removed
- 7) The opposite side is performed, if necessary

How long does the procedure take?: Usually between 2-5 minutes.

How much pain will this cause?: This is typically not a very painful procedure.

What to know during the procedure?:

- You will need to lay flat on your stomach during the entire procedure.
- **DO NOT move during the procedure: please let us know if you are in significant pain.** Motion will affect the live x-ray images and can be dangerous while a needle is being placed. Please remain still at all times. (If you are unable to lay flat on your stomach or do not believe you can lay still, we recommend choosing to have your injection done at the surgery center).
- **The site of the injection will be cleaned off with a sterile solution before the injection. Please DO NOT touch near the area that is being cleaned as that would contaminate the area.** A plan is already made of where needle is being placed based off MRI results, history and exam at the time of your last office visit.



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When can I schedule the second medial branch block?: We need to evaluate the effects of the first block, but insurance typically mandates at least two weeks between procedures.

When can I schedule the ablation?: Scheduling time will depend on insurance approval and availability. Standard time for approval is about 2 weeks.

ACTIVITY RESTRICTIONS:

- Do not submerge in water for two days (i.e. pool, bath, hot tub)- **you may shower.**
- You may perform light duties immediately after your procedure and resume your usual pre-procedure activities the following day. Don't do activities you have not recently performed.

Other Important Information:

1) Numbness: Lidocaine or other anesthetics can cause temporary numbness in the surrounding area for several hours.

2) Pain: You may experience pain or a burning sensation at or about the injection site or muscular spasm. To help alleviate the discomfort you can apply an ice pack to the area for the first 2 to 3 days (maximum 20 minutes at a time with a 40-minute rest period). Afterwards, if symptoms persist, just apply moist or dry heat.

3) Allergic Reactions: Although rare, they do occur. Most reactions are mild and resolved within 24 hours. If you have any type of allergic reaction, (i.e. rash, redness, or swelling), please contact our office as soon as possible. If you notice facial swelling or have difficulty breathing, please go to the nearest Emergency Room for further evaluation.

5) Headache: Patients who receive injections around the spine will occasionally experience a spinal headache from a spinal fluid leak. **This is very uncommon for this procedure.** These headaches are usually temporary and typically relieved by common headache relief measures, including taking Tylenol or ibuprofen, increasing fluid intake (especially caffeine drinks) and lying flat.

BEFORE THE PROCEDURE, WHAT ARE REAONS I SHOULD CANCEL?:

- 1) **Active Infection:** If you are prescribed antibiotics, have a fever, are unwell etc. — CALL THE CLINIC TO SEE IF THE PROCEDURE NEEDS TO BE RESCHEDULED. THE PROCEDURE WILL NOT BE PERFORMED IF YOU HAVE AN ACTIVE INFECTION.
- 2) You no longer have pain. We cannot measure if this helps, if you are not hurting at the time of your injection.

SITE CARE: You may remove the band aid 2 hours after the injection **and resume your normal hygiene care.**



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Note on the Surgery Center:

- **If you elect to have the medial branch blocks done at the surgery center, YOU WILL NOT BE PUT TO SLEEP.** You will receive **conscious sedation** so your procedure is slightly more comfortable. We do not put people to sleep (monitored anesthesia care, general anesthesia, or “twilight”) for medial branch blocks. Monitored anesthesia care (like a colonoscopy) is typically used for the ablation.

PLEASE NOTIFY THE OFFICE AT (423) 624-2696 IMMEDIATELY IF YOU EXPERIENCE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING, ALL OF WHICH ARE EXTREMELY RARE AND VERY UNLIKELY:

- Excessive swelling at the injection site.
- Chills, fever, drainage, bleeding at site.
- Weakness or loss of use of extremities.
- New weakness or loss of control of bladder or bowels.
- Headache unrelieved by the above measures.

IF YOU ARE NOT CONTACTED, PLEASE GO TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM

This information sheet was designed for patients but is not by any means exhaustive on this subject and we encourage you to forward any further questions to your provider.