

STELLATE GANGLION BLOCK FACT SHEET



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This fact sheet aims to answer some general questions about the stellate ganglion block. Please read the following information carefully. If you need further information, please ask your doctor or pain nurse.

What Is the Stellate Ganglion?

The stellate ganglion is a bundle of nerves that are found on either side of the neck. These nerves do not control feeling or movement; instead, they regulate other functions of the body, such as directing blood supply and stimulating sweat glands.

What Is a Stellate Ganglion Block?

A stellate ganglion block is an interventional procedure consisting of an injection that targets the stellate ganglion to interrupt its ability to send pain messages to the brain.

Why Perform a Stellate Ganglion Block?

For various reasons, the stellate ganglion may become injured or sensitised, which means that when it is stimulated, it results in pain in the affected area (such as the head, neck, upper chest or upper limb). Some common conditions in which the stellate ganglion may be affected include shingles and Complex Regional

Pain Syndrome affecting the areas mentioned above.

Patients can require strong medication, such as opioids, and other medications that target nerve pain, in order to control this pain. However, these medications can also cause unwanted side effects like drowsiness, fatigue and constipation.

A stellate ganglion block can help to reduce the activity of the nerves, which in turn reduces pain as well as other symptoms like sweating. It is important to remember that the injection usually does not stop all pain, but it may lessen the need to use pain medication.

Most patients feel some, although not total, relief from pain after the procedure. The benefit of the stellate ganglion block varies from patient to patient, but it may last up to several weeks. Repeat injections are often considered if the initial block was considered helpful.

What Happens Before and After the Procedure?

It is recommended that blood-thinning products be stopped prior to the procedure. You will be advised on the recommendation for your specific circumstances when we confirm your procedure. You will be able to continue taking all your other medications with a sip of water on the day of your procedure.

Please refer to the *Interventional Procedure Pre-Admission Fact Sheet* for further, detailed information.

What Happens During the Procedure?

A stellate ganglion block is performed under imaging guidance in the operating theatre or radiology department. The whole procedure usually takes 30 - 60 minutes. You may be sedated prior to the procedure.

Local anaesthetic will be injected under your skin to numb the discomfort of the block needle. A different local anaesthetic will then be injected to the stellate ganglion to numb the nerves. In some cases, the local anaesthetic solution will also contain a steroid. The steroid acts to reduce any inflammation or swelling around the nerves.

What Are Possible Side Effects?

Any invasive interventions, including a stellate ganglion block, may cause complications that can be serious. By performing the procedure under

imaging guidance and sterile conditions, we aim to minimise the risk of serious complications.

Common side effects include:

- Droopy or red eye
- Temperature increase in the affected area
- Hoarseness of voice
- Difficulty swallowing or feeling a lump in the throat
- Pain, tenderness, swelling or bruising around the injection

Less common, but also possible complications:

- Infection (around the injection site internally or externally)
- Bleeding (around the injection site internally or externally)
- Allergic reaction to the dye or medicines injected
- Surrounding nerve or spinal block
- Injury to surrounding nerves
- Injury to surrounding organs
- Local anaesthetic toxicity
- Failure of injection