



## **What is the purpose of this procedure?**

The celiac plexus block is a procedure used to decrease pain in the abdomen (stomach area), usually related to cancer. The celiac plexus is an area in front of the spine. This area has a group of nerves that transport pain sensations from the internal organs located in the upper abdomen (stomach area). These organs include the liver, gall bladder, pancreas, small bowel and part of the large bowel. Local anesthetic (medication that produces loss of feeling in a small area of the body) is often used to numb these nerves. Alcohol or phenol can then be used to destroy them. This stops the nerves from feeling pain. About 70 out of 100 of people with cancer related pain will have benefit from this procedure.

## **What are the risks associated with this procedure?**

The risks for this procedure are infrequent. They include:

- Allergic reaction to medication
- Nerve damage (spinal cord and nerve roots)
- Bleeding and bruising at the injection site
- Infection
- No improvement or worsening of your pain (in some cases)

Given the location of the celiac plexus it is possible to puncture the lung (pneumothorax), large blood vessels (aorta), and other surrounding organs. There have been rare reports following this procedure of a tear in the lining of the aorta (aortic dissection) and paralysis of the legs and lower body (paraplegia) although these are extremely rare.

Some temporary side effects following the procedure include worsening of pain, low blood pressure, and abdominal cramping/diarrhea.

## **How should I prepare for the procedure?**

- You must have a driver with you at the time of check in and check out. Your driver must accompany you to the clinic for your procedure. You can be discharged only to the care of a responsible adult driver 18 or older.
- Since you will be receiving sedation, it is important that you do not eat within 6 hours before the procedure. Small amounts of clear liquids are ok up to 2 hours before the procedure. If you are a diabetic, be sure to discuss eating and medication schedule with your doctor.
- You may need to stop taking certain medications several days before the procedure. Please remind the doctor of all prescription and over-the-counter medications you take, including herbal and vitamin supplements. The doctor will tell you if and when you need to discontinue the medications.
- It is very important to tell the doctor if you have asthma or had an allergic reaction to the injected dye for a previous radiology exam (CT scan, angiogram, etc). An allergic reaction has symptoms such as hives, itchiness, difficulty breathing, or any treatment which required hospital stay. The doctor may prescribe medications for you to take before having the procedure.
- Tell the doctor if you develop a cold, fever, or flu symptoms before your scheduled appointment, or if you have started taking antibiotics for an infection.

## **What will happen during the procedure?**

The procedure is performed on an outpatient basis in a special procedure room equipped with a fluoroscope (x-ray).

1. In the pre-procedure area the nurse or doctor places an IV line. This is used for fluids and sedation.
2. For your safety and comfort when you get to the procedure room you will be connected to monitoring equipment (EKG monitor, blood pressure cuff, and blood oxygen monitoring device), and positioned on your stomach.

3. Your back is cleansed with an antiseptic soap then the doctor injects numbing medicine into your skin. This will cause a burning sensation for a few seconds.
4. The doctor then carefully directs a needle with the help of the fluoroscope (x-ray) to the location of the celiac plexus. Contrast dye will be injected to help see the needle better and ensure correct needle placement.
5. Then the doctor injects local anesthetic to numb the nerves. You may be asked if you have any numbness or weakness in your legs. Alcohol may then be injected to destroy the nerves.

An alternate approach may be used for some people using an ultrasound machine and injection through the abdomen.

### **What should I expect after the procedure?**

After the procedure you will spend 30 to 60 minutes in the recovery area. Occasionally people may develop abdominal cramping/diarrhea or low blood pressure following the procedure. If any of these occur, they will be temporary and are often easily treatable.

You may develop worsening pain or backache, particularly if alcohol is used. You may not notice until several hours following the procedure when the anesthetic wears off. The pain could last several days but is usually treated at home with extra pain medication. Occasionally it requires hospital admission for pain control.

As the nerves die back you will begin feeling better and may resume your usual activities.

**If you would like further information including videos of procedures, please visit our website: <http://www.umpain.com/>**

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