

What is the purpose of this procedure?

Occipital nerve blocks are used to evaluate and manage headaches or nerve related pain on the back of the head. The **greater and lesser occipital nerves** are located on the back of the head and carry pain signals from just above the neck to the top of the head. Injecting local anesthetic (numbing medicine) and occasionally a steroid can help reduce irritation and inflammation (swelling) of the nerves and surrounding structures.

What are the risks associated with this procedure?

The risks are infrequent. They include:

- Fainting
- Allergic reaction to medication
- Nerve damage
- Bleeding and bruising at the injection site
- Pain at the injection site or during the injection
- Infection
- Injection of medication into a blood vessel
- No improvement or worsening of your pain in some cases

How should I prepare for the procedure?

- 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.
- 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?

1. You will sit in a chair and place your head over a pillow on the exam table.
2. The doctor performing the procedure locates the areas to be injected by examining the back of your head. The areas are cleaned off with an alcohol swab.
3. The doctor directs a small needle to the back of your head and places the anesthetic solution near the occipital nerves.

What should I do after the procedure?

Many people feel immediate relief following the injections. As long as you are otherwise feeling ok, you may check out after your injections. If you experience any dizziness or lightheadedness, we may have you lie down for a period of time until it resolves. It is normal to feel some swelling on the back of your head where the medication was injected. This will gradually resolve over the next few days. Numbness over the back of the head may last 12 hours or more, but pain relief can last longer. Your response will be evaluated at your next follow-up visit.

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

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