

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

The superior hypogastric plexus block is a procedure used to decrease pain in the pelvis. The **superior hypogastric plexus** is an area in front of the spine where nerves lie that transport pain sensations from the internal organs of the pelvis. Some of these organs include the uterus, cervix, vagina, bladder, prostate, and rectum. Local anesthetic (medication that produces loss of feeling) is often used to numb these nerves, while alcohol or phenol can be used to destroy them. This block is often used to treat pelvic pain (often due to cancer) when oral medications and other conventional treatments have failed.

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

The risks are infrequent. They include:

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

## **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 have diabetes discuss an 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.
- 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). In the pre-procedure area, the nurse or doctor will place an IV line. This is used for fluids and sedation. Occasionally an antibiotic may also be administered.

1. When you get to the procedure room for your safety and comfort you will be connected to monitoring equipment (EKG monitor, blood pressure cuff, and blood oxygen monitoring device), and positioned on your stomach.
2. Your back is cleansed with an antiseptic soap and the doctor injects numbing medicine into your skin. This will cause a burning sensation for a few seconds.
3. The doctor then carefully directs a needle with the help of the fluoroscope (x-ray) to the location of the superior hypogastric plexus. Contrast dye is injected to ensure correct needle placement. Then the doctor will inject local anesthetic to numb the nerves. You may be asked if you have any numbness or weakness in your legs.

4. Alcohol may then be injected to destroy the nerves.

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

After the procedure you will be taken to the recovery area for about 30 minutes.

It is possible to develop worsening pain or backache, particularly if alcohol is used. You may not notice this until several hours following the procedure after the anesthetic wears off, but it can last several days. Usually you can treat it at home with extra pain medication, but 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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