

## What is a Stellate Ganglion Block?

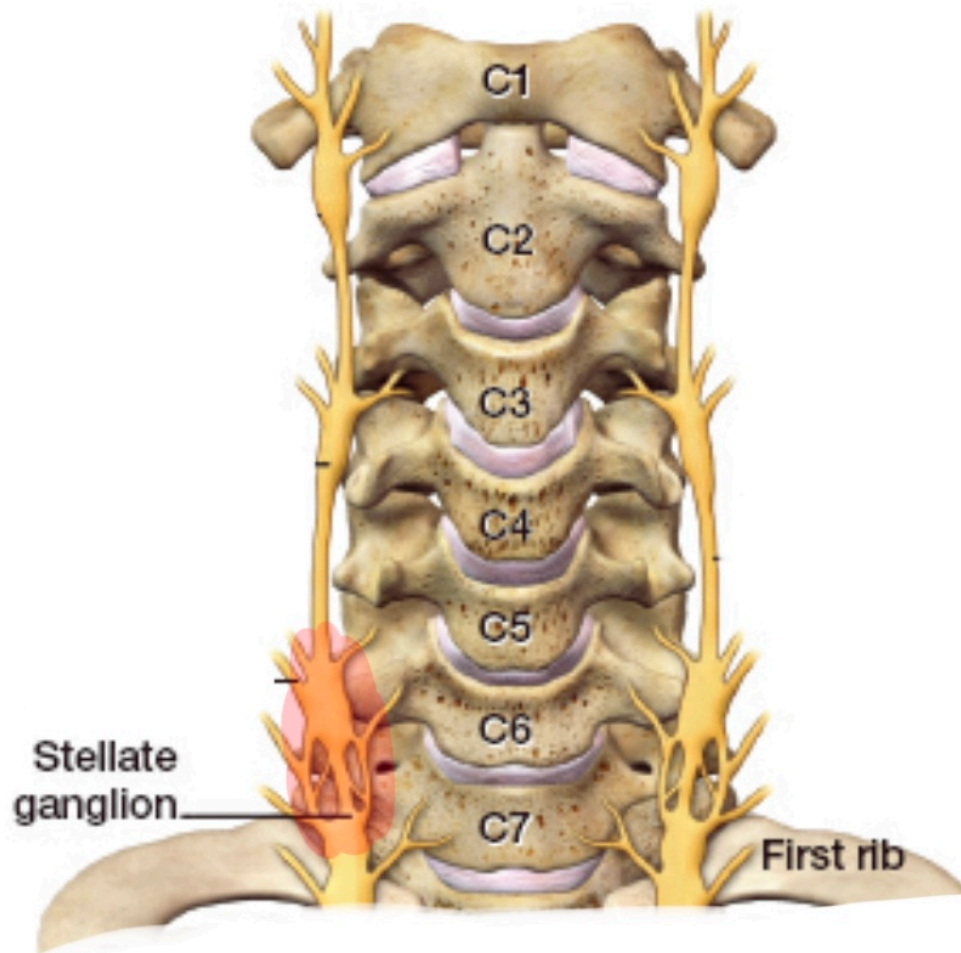
A Stellate Ganglion block is an injection of drugs into the a collection of nerves in the neck that cause pain in the case of CRPS (Complex Regional Pain Syndrome). This may also be used for vascular problems.

## Why perform a Stellate Ganglion Block?

A Stellate Ganglion block is performed in order to get drugs, such as steroids and local anesthetic, as close to the nerve collection as possible. With CRPS this collection of nerves causes extreme discomfort and may make the patient feel like non painful stimulus (air blowing across hand, etc) is unbearably painful.

Performing this injection interrupts this constant sensation of pain and will allow you to perform physical therapy. This is a vital part of your recovery.

**If you are taking a blood thinning medication you must let us know beforehand as this increases your risk tremendously. We will discuss your options and optimize the safety of this procedure.**



## Can anyone have a Stellate Ganglion Block?

Most people can have a Stellate Ganglion block. If you have any localized infection, such as a boil on your neck, or a generalized infection, the procedure would not be performed until the infection has cleared up.

The procedure is done under X-ray to ensure that the injection is given in the correct place. If you are female and below the age of 55 you will be asked about the date of your last period, and

if it is more than 28 days ago you, will be asked whether you are likely to be pregnant. Although the amount of radiation used is small, there is always a risk to the fetus. Occasionally we may need to ask you to have a pregnancy test.

The procedure cannot be done on anyone who has a problem with their blood clotting. Most commonly this is due to taking blood-thinning medication.

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## What are the risks and complications?

The commonest problems relate to local anesthetic which may be used. This is injected into the neck to confirm that the injection has reached the appropriate nerves, so there may be some numbness and weakness of the arm. Some patients also feel dizziness until the local anesthetic has worn off.

Because the local anesthetic has an effect upon the nerves which supply the blood vessels in the arms, and makes them relax, there may be a fall in blood pressure which is associated with a feeling of faintness and nausea. This can be treated quite easily by giving fluid or drugs to reverse this effect.

Infection is always a risk whenever anything is injected into the body, and we take precautions to avoid this by performing the procedure as a fully sterile technique. If an infection does get in it can produce the symptoms of feeling unwell, headache, and stiffness of the neck. This can occur quite soon after the injection.

There is the possibility of an abscess forming in the epidural space, which may occur after two or three days, and would give rise to pain in the back and worsening pain in the extremities. This is more likely to occur if you are taking medicines to thin the blood. Overall, these complications are extremely rare. However, if you start to suffer from any of these symptoms, you must go and see your doctor or the Emergency Room of your local hospital urgently (do not go to Urgent Care) , and inform them that you have had an epidural injection.

## How is the procedure performed?

The procedure is performed in the operating room or office under live X-ray. When you arrive a small needle may be inserted into one of your veins, for safety, so that should any drugs be required, they can be easily given. You will be expected to lie on the table on your back.

Local anesthetic is injected into the skin and deeper tissues to reduce the discomfort of the procedure. However, when the needle is inserted there will be a feeling of someone pushing in your neck, which is normal. The doctor may also put pressure on your neck to move structures out of the way. This may cause hoarseness. When the doctor has put the needle in, X-rays will be taken to confirm that the needle is correctly positioned. When the operator has confirmed that the needle is in the correct place, the injection will be given and the needle removed.

## What happens after the procedure?

After the procedure you will go into the recovery area or return to the ward where your blood pressure will be monitored.

As local anesthetic is normally used as part of the injection technique, you will notice some numbness or weakness of your legs. This is only a temporary problem, which will wear off.

The local anesthetic may also affect your ability to pass urine. Therefore you will not be allowed to go home until you have full sensation in your legs.

## Why you must not drive yourself home

You may have impaired function or ability to drive safely. Therefore, for your own well-being, we advise that you are collected by a friend or relative.

## What pain might you experience after the procedure?

The amount of pain experienced might become worse for a short period of time. If this occurs, it is not dangerous and should settle over time.

## Back at home

You can remove the dressing from the injection site after 24 hours.

## Will you be followed up afterwards?

You will be called for follow up to determine how the epidural has helped you.

## Important information

Please let us know before if you have:

A cold/flu

Fever/chills

A persistent cough

You are taking a course of antibiotics prior to procedure

Or there has been any significant change in your overall health as this may affect your procedure.

**Failure to do so may result in your procedure being cancelled on the day.**

## Medication

Please take all your prescribed medication as normal prior to your procedure unless you have been otherwise advised

Please bring a list of all your current medication when you attend for your procedure

## Can I eat before I come in?

If you plan to get sedation for the procedure you should not eat from midnight the night before.

If you have any questions or concerns about this procedure call the office at 480-636-1225.