



Information for You from Your Health Care Team

Sympathetic Block

Sympathetic block is used when you have small nerve fibers that transmit some kind of pain. This kind of block uses a local anesthetic to block the nerve signals at various levels in the body. These may include epidural sympathetic blocks, stellate ganglion blocks, interscalene blocks or blocks for the lower extremity.

When is a sympathetic block used?

A sympathetic block is used to control pain that is a result of:

- Complex Regional Pain syndrome
- Vascular problems
- Herpes zoster
- Raynaud's disease
- Phantom limb pain
- Scleroderma
- Cancer
- Frostbite

What happens during a lumbar sympathetic block?

First a local anesthesia with lidocaine is given to numb the area. Next, a needle is inserted through the skin in the back till it reaches the epidural space. A local anesthetic will then be injected in low concentrations until the pain lessens. The amount of anesthetic given will vary from person to person.

Sympathetic Block *Continued*

What are the possible side effects and complications?

Right after the block you might temporarily experience:

- Bleeding
- Pain at the injection site
- Weakness in limbs
- Stiff neck
- Lower blood pressure
- Complications that rarely occur are:
- Headache following entrance of needle into the spinal canal
- Injection of medication into a blood vessel.