

Nerve Root Block

A nerve root block is typically ordered for leg pain that follows the path of a single nerve. A nerve root block is performed using image guidance and involves injecting along a specific nerve in the spine with anti-inflammatory steroid and local anesthetic.

Before the procedure

For your safety, you will have to be off any **blood thinning medications** for a certain number of days before the procedure. However, **do not stop this medication without getting permission to do so from the physician who prescribed it.** You must do this before each procedure, as your medical situation can change over time.

- General guidelines are as follows:
 - For **Coumadin**, you will need to stop taking this for 5 days before having your procedure.
 - If you are on Coumadin, a PT/INR should be ordered by your primary care physician. You can have your blood work drawn on the day before your scheduled procedure and have the results faxed to us at 617-754-6463.
 - For **Plavix, Persantine, Aggrenox, Trental** or **Arixtra** you will need to stop taking them for 7 days before having your procedure.
 - For **Lovenox**, you will need to stop 48 hours before having your procedure.
 - For **Heparin**, you will need to stop 6 hours before having your procedure.
 - For **Ticlid**, you will need to stop 14 days before having your procedure.
 - For **Pradaxa (Dabigatran)**, you will need to stop 4 days before having your procedure.
- It is ok to continue taking Motrin and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs).
- Please continue to take **Aspirin** if it has been prescribed to you by a physician.
- Please notify us if you are allergic to Betadine, iodinated contrast material (CT scan dye), lidocaine, or steroids.
- Before we perform the injection, review of your MRI or CT scan is required.
 - If your imaging was performed outside of NEBH, **Please obtain a copy prior to your appointment and either:**
 - **Upload your images from home by visiting: nebh.org/ImageUpload**
 - **Or by bringing a copy with you the day of your procedure**
- We generally do not inject steroids in patients with active infections (viral, bacterial, etc.). **If you are taking antibiotics currently or have an active infection at this time, please notify us.**

What to expect

- The procedure takes approximately 15 minutes.
- During the injection there may be a mild to moderate discomfort in the hip and leg (typically in the same location of the painful nerve).
- There is potential for leg numbness and weakness after the procedure.
- Due to this potential side effect, we require someone to accompany you the day of your procedure. This person should be able to assist you from your car into your home.

Possible side effects

Like all procedures, a nerve block has some side effects, but they are rare.

- Consult your referring physician as a precaution if you have any persistent numbness, weakness, or pain beyond 6 hours.

- We have not had any infections to date, but contact your doctor if you have any signs of infection including fever, chills or local redness, swelling or pain over the 2 to 3 weeks following procedure.

After the procedure

- Following the injection it is common to feel temporary leg numbness and varying degrees of leg weakness.
- If you have leg numbness or weakness, please walk only with assistance until the numbness and weakness clears. Furthermore, you should not try to attempt to drive your car until the leg returns to normal.
- Some patients note cramping discomfort in the leg following the procedure lasting 1 to 3 hours (rarely as long as 5 hours); You may take your usual pain reliever for this.
- There may be immediate relief symptoms due to the local anesthesia, but this will be temporary (you should inform your doctor if such relief occurs because it is helpful for diagnosis). Longer lasting or permanent relief which may result from the steroid injected can take from 3 days to 2 weeks.
- If you are diabetic, you may have an increase in blood sugar for several days following this procedure; please discuss this with the physician treating your diabetes.

If you have any questions, please call the Radiology Department at 617-754-5287 option 3.