

Pacific Coast Spine Institute and Pain Center

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Dorsal Root Ganglion Nerve Root Block

What is Dorsal Root Ganglion Nerve Root Block?

The procedure called a dorsal root ganglion block is where a small amount of local anesthetic with or without a steroid is injected onto a collection of nerve cells called the dorsal root ganglion. The dorsal root ganglion are located on either side of the spine. This collection of nerves carries impulses from muscles and other parts of the body to the spinal cord and from there to the brain.

When these nerves become inflamed or pinched they can give rise to pain. The physician feels that by performing a dorsal root ganglion block is worth trying to help alleviate your pain and has proved to be very effective for some patients.

Where is it done?

The procedure is done at Pacific Coast Spine Institute and Pain Center's private out-patient surgery center.

How is it done?

- You may be asked to remove your upper garments and wear a hospital gown.
- You will be asked to lie on your stomach on the fluoroscopy table.
- Fluoroscopy (x-ray) pictures are taken throughout the procedure to help the physician direct the needle to the dorsal root ganglion.
- The area to be injected is cleaned with sterile antiseptic.
- The physician numbs the area with an injection of local anesthetic prior to proceeding to the dorsal root ganglion.
- You may experience some discomfort during the procedure. Without using your hands, tell the physician what kind of pain you feel (sharp, shooting, etc) and where (at injection site, down the right leg, etc). This will help her to know if the needle is exactly where it needs to be.
- Sedation is not normally used for this procedure. If you feel anxious, you may discuss your options with the physician prior to the injection being carried out.

How long will it take?

The procedure is done on an out-patient basis, and although the procedure itself takes 15-30 minutes, you should plan on being at the surgery center between 1-2 hours. This allows for pre-op admission and post-op observation to ensure there are no problems prior to you going home.

Can I eat and drink?

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You may have a light early breakfast on the day of the procedure. After the procedure you will be offered a drink and a snack.

Can I take my usual medications?

You may take your regular medications in the morning and bring your medications with you. Patients taking blood thinners will be given individual information.

Can I drive home?

Unless you have sedation, if you were able to drive yourself to the surgery center you should be able to drive yourself home at your discretion. If you have had any kind of sedation, you are required to have a driver.

What can go wrong?

- You may experience mild discomfort at the site of the injection. This should not last more than 48 hours.
- In about one third of patients, site discomfort can last for up to 1 week. Injection site pain is normal but if the pain is severe, or persists for more than several days, please contact your physician.
- Occasionally you may feel sore or bruised for the first day or so until the steroids start to work.
- Rarely you may experience a numb leg which lasts only a few hours.
- There may be a local allergic reaction to the drugs contained in the injection which results in redness and itching. If this occurs, note the specific time and reaction, and notify us to document in your records.

Will it work?

Dorsal root ganglion injections can be very effective but do not work for everyone. If it is being used as a diagnostic tool, further treatments may be advised. The benefits may be short term or long term. It is important to continue and increase simple activities and exercises such as taking the stairs, and walking daily.