

# Suprascapular Nerve Block and/or Ablation

A nerve block relieves pain by blocking the pain signal sent to your brain. Some nerve blocks are used to find out sources of pain. Others are used to treat painful conditions. A suprascapular nerve block is an injection of a local anesthetic and steroid to block the nerves that influence pain in the shoulder. The ablation uses radiofrequency to decrease pain for a longer period.

## Conditions treated

You might benefit from a suprascapular nerve block and ablation if you suffer from:

- Shoulder pain
- Rotator cuff injury
- Scapular pain

## Duration

Less than 30 minutes

## How is it performed?

Prior to the steroid injection or ablation you will be positioned on your stomach. The injection site will be cleaned and local anesthetic will be used to numb the effected area. To ensure proper needle placement, your physician may utilize fluoroscopic x-ray technology or ultrasonic guidance. When the physician is assured the needle is in the correct location, a mixture of steroid and local anesthetic will be injected.

If the steroid injection affords you significant pain relief, you will be eligible for radiofrequency denervation. This entails creating a heat lesion around the nerves in order to block the nerves from carrying pain signals to the brain. The ablation lasts 60-100 seconds and feels like a warm, cramping sensation. This typically provides 6 months to a year of relief.

## Prior to your procedure

You may continue taking all medications before the procedure.

## What are some of the risks and side effects?

This procedure is a relatively safe, non-surgical treatment, with minimal risks of complications. Some of the most common or possible side effects are:

- Weakness
- Infection
- Increased pain
- Vascular injection
- Bruising

## What to expect after the procedure

After the injection procedure, you might feel a weak or numb sensation where the medication was injected. As the numbing medication wears off over the first couple days, you may experience an

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increase in pain. Once the steroid begins to work, you should experience pain relief. If you have the ablation you may be sore for up to 3 weeks, but this usually resolves in 1 week.

Ice is typically more helpful than heat during the first two to three days after the injection.

If you have sedation, you should not drive or engage in physical activity for 24 hours following the procedure.

Slowly ease back into exercise routines over a period of one to two weeks.

You should call your doctor if you experience a fever over 101 within 72 hours of the procedure.

After the radiofrequency procedure, you can expect to have soreness around the injection sites for up to 3 weeks. Pain relief is typically expected within a month of the procedure and this relief can last from 6 months to a year.

However, not all patients will achieve pain relief with this procedure and some will experience shorter periods of pain relief than others.

