

Lumbar Sympathetic Block

A Lumbar Sympathetic Block is a procedure intended to relieve pain in the lower extremities. This is achieved by blocking the pain signals traveling to the brain from the lumbar sympathetic plexus through the use of an anesthetic and steroid

Conditions treated

You may benefit from a Lumbar Sympathetic Block if you suffer from:

- Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy (RSD)
- Sympathetic Maintained Pain
- Complex Regional Pain Syndrome
- Shingles
- Neuropathy
- Peripheral Vascular Disease

Duration

30 minutes

How is it performed?

Once you are lying on your stomach, the physician will numb the skin at the injection site with a local anesthetic. To ensure the needle is in the correct location, a contrast dye is injected at the target site and is tracked via X-ray. Once assured that the needle is in the proper position, the physician will then inject an anesthetic along with a steroid over the course of a few minutes. Your vital signs will be monitored for the duration of the procedure.

Prior to your procedure

You should continue taking all medications except blood thinners before the procedure. Please see your medication handout to know when to hold and resume these medications.

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:

- Muscle cramping, increased appetite, flushing, headache, elevated blood sugar and nausea, which can last up to 2 weeks.
- Weakness in the legs
- Low blood pressure
- Diarrhea
- Increased pain
- Infection

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What to expect after the procedure

You can expect to feel a warm sensation in the legs and possibly a temporary numb sensation in the lower extremities. As the numbing medication wears off over the first couple days, you may experience an increase in pain. Once the steroid begins to work, you should experience pain relief.

Ice is typically more helpful than heat during the first few days after the injection.

You should not drive or engage in physical activity for 24 hours following the procedure.

You should resume medications and regular eating habits immediately. Please see your medication handout for instructions on resuming blood thinners or ask your doctor.

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

