

Occipital Nerve Block

An occipital nerve block is the injection of a corticosteroid into the scalp at the back of the head. This procedure can help to diagnose and treat occipital neuralgia, which can present in the form of shooting or stabbing pain in the neck radiating into the head. This treatment will help to reduce the inflammation and swelling surrounding the occipital nerves, which may result in pain reduction.

Conditions treated

You may benefit from an occipital nerve block if you suffer from:

- Occipital neuralgia
- Tension headaches

Duration

Less than 30 minutes

How is it performed?

You will be asked to lie down on your stomach. The back of the head will be cleaned and the area to be injected will be anesthetized using numbing medication. Needle placement may be guided through the use of ultrasound technology. Once proper placement of the needle is confirmed, the physician will slowly inject the solution of steroid medication.

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 or ask your doctor.

What are some of the risks and side effects?

This procedure is a relatively safe, non-surgical treatment with minimal risks of complications. Some possible side effects include:

- Allergic reaction — swelling, rash, or itchiness. Call a physician immediately if you exhibit any of these symptoms.
- Numbness
- Bruising at the injection site

What to expect after the procedure

Immediately after the injection, you may feel that your pain is gone or has decreased. This is due to the local anesthetic injected and will last only for a few hours. Once the anesthetic wears off, your pain may return and you may have a sore head for a day or two. You should start noticing more lasting pain relief a few days after the procedure.

You may want to apply ice to the injected area, and avoid strenuous activity.

Call your physician if you experience any severe pain, redness/swelling/ discharge at the injection site, or fever/chills.

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