



SYMPATHETIC BLOCK (ABLATION)

SPLANCHNIC - COELIAC- HYPOGASTRIC – GANGLION IMPAR

This page is all about sympathetic blocks for abdominal and pelvic pain, why we do them, what they do and what you should expect. More information is available at <http://www.fpmx.com.au/solutions.html#diagnostic-procedures>

WHAT ARE THE SYMPATHETIC NERVES?

The sympathetic nerves live next to your spine and travel with the blood vessels around the body. They are part of your subconscious nervous system. They help control things like sweating and the size of your veins – they are responsible for the enlarged veins and sweaty feet on a hot day! They also provide sensation to your internal organs, such as liver, pancreas, ovaries and testicles.

WHAT IS A SYMPATHETIC BLOCK?

It is an injection of local anaesthetic into a group of sympathetic nerves (plexus or ganglion). It is usually done to relieve pain, to improve blood flow to an area of the body that has insufficient blood flow.

WHERE ARE THE SYMPATHETIC NERVES?

They lie on each side near the front of the spine (back bone) in the neck, chest, abdomen just behind the heart, lungs and bowels. The nerves lie next to the major veins (inferior vena cava) and arteries (aorta) in your chest and abdomen. We perform sympathetic blocks using xray guidance to deliver the medication to the right spot and to avoid these important structures.

- Splanchnic nerves arise in the chest and pass to the Coeliac plexus just under your diaphragm (mostly blocked for pain from pancreas and other upper abdominal pain)
- Hypogastric plexus lies in front of the sacrum in the top of your pelvis (blocked for genital or perineum pain)
- Ganglion Impar lies in front of the coccyx (mostly blocked for anal and sacrococcygeal pain)

WHAT COULD GO WRONG?

Potential side effects include temporary weakness in the leg, numbness in the groin, faintness and dizziness. The potential risks include bleeding, infection, spinal block, unwanted nerve injury and damage to nearby structures. The chance of a catastrophic problem is very small.

WHAT EFFECTS WILL I NOTICE IF EVERYTHING IS NORMAL?

Usually the first thing you will notice is that your pain is gone.

- Coeliac - some people feel faint from low blood pressure and have diarrhoea for several days.
- Hypogastric – not much else, unless the local anaesthetic moves onto some of the nerves of your legs



- Ganglion Impar – not much else

The local anaesthetic may move from the site of the injection onto other nearby nerves supplying other structures, causing temporary numbness/weakness.

WHAT SHOULD I WORRY ABOUT?

After you leave the hospital, pain at the injection site is normal for a few days. Severe abdominal or back pain, fever and breathing difficulties are the main hazards. If you have any of these problems after leaving hospital, go to the nearest emergency department and tell them you have had a block.

HOW WILL I FEEL AFTER I GET HOME?

It is very difficult to predict. Most patients feel sleepy because the pain has stopped them sleeping normally, and now with no pain, sleep happens. It is common to feel a little unbalanced when getting up for a while, so I advise that you take it easy for a few hours.

HOW SOON CAN I EAT AND DRINK?

When you feel like it.

HOW MANY BLOCKS WILL BE NEEDED?

Usually three blocks will indicate whether you are going to get improvement from this treatment.

In some case **ABLATION** will give a block that lasts for some months. This is achieved by using alcohol, phenol or heat which destroy the working part of the nerves. The side effects listed above may then last some months

Please make a review appointment in 2 - 4 weeks.