

EMORY PAIN CENTER

Nerve Block

What is a nerve block? A nerve block is a procedure performed to relieve pain by temporarily interrupting the pain signals along a specific nerve or group of nerves. It involves injecting a local anesthetic or a combination of a local anesthetic and a steroid near the targeted nerve(s).

What are the indications for a nerve block? Nerve blocks are used to treat various types of pain, including chronic pain, acute pain, and pain caused by nerve injuries or conditions. They can be used for pain management in different parts of the body, such as the neck, back, arms, legs, or face. Nerve blocks are often recommended when other conservative treatments, such as medications or physical therapy, have been ineffective.

What is involved in a nerve block procedure? Prior to the procedure, an IV may be placed to administer sedation if necessary. You will be positioned in a way that allows the healthcare provider to access the targeted nerve(s). The skin around the injection site will be cleaned and numbed with a local anesthetic. Using imaging guidance, such as ultrasound or fluoroscopy, the healthcare provider will accurately locate the targeted nerve(s) and inject the medication. The medication may include a local anesthetic to provide immediate pain relief and a steroid to reduce inflammation and provide long-term relief. The procedure typically takes about 15 minutes, followed by a short recovery period.

What are the side effects/risks of a nerve block? Nerve blocks are generally safe procedures, but like any medical intervention, they carry some risks. Possible side effects include temporary numbness, weakness, or tingling near the injection site. In rare cases, complications such as infection, bleeding, nerve damage, or allergic reactions to the medications used may occur. It is important to discuss any concerns or existing medical conditions with your healthcare provider before the procedure.

How effective is a nerve block? The effectiveness of a nerve block varies from person to person. While some individuals experience immediate and long-lasting pain relief, others may require multiple injections or additional treatments for optimal results. It is important to manage your expectations and communicate with your healthcare provider regarding your pain levels and any changes in your symptoms after the procedure.