

Stellate Ganglion Block

This injection can both diagnose and treat pain coming from the sympathetic nerves. It is a common treatment for shingles and Complex Regional Pain Syndromes affecting the head, face, neck, or arms. Usually a series of these injections is needed to treat the problem.

STEP 1

Patients lie on their back on a table equipped with a special x-ray (fluoroscopic) unit, and an intravenous (IV) line is started to administer medication that relaxes the patient. A local anesthetic numbs the skin and all the tissue down to the ganglion nerves.

STEP 2

The physician slides a needle through the anesthetized track. A contrast solution is injected so the physician can use an x-ray (fluoroscope) to see the painful areas and to confirm the correct location of the needle tip.

STEP 3

Next, a mixture of anesthetic, saline and anti-inflammatory medicine is injected around the ganglion nerves to block pain signals from reaching the brain.

END OF PROCEDURE

Common side effects include nasal congestion and a bloodshot, droopy eye on the side the injection was given, as well as a hoarse voice and a warm, tingling sensation in the arm and hand. They usually disappear after several hours. If the first injection alleviates pain, more will follow over time. Pain relief usually lasts longer after each injection.

