

SPHENOPALATINE GANGLION BLOCK INFORMATION FOR ALL PATIENTS

BACKGROUND:

The sphenopalatine ganglion (SPG) is a collection of nerve cells located under the tissue lining in the back of the nose. These nerve cells are closely associated with the trigeminal nerve, the main nerve involved in frontal headaches. The SPG carries information about sensation, including pain, and plays a role in autonomic functions, such as tearing and nasal congestion. The link between the SPG and the trigeminal nerve is important in head pain. If you apply local anesthetics to block or partially block the SPG, this can reduce migraines as well as head and facial pain. SPG blocks are always performed bilaterally (both sides), even with unilateral (one sides) symptoms as there are cross-connections between the SPG on each side.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN A SHENOPALATINE GANGLION BLOCK?

The radiologist will insert a small, soft catheter into the patient's nasal passage under fluoroscopic guidance. There are no needles, but a topical local analgesia will be used to decrease any discomfort. Once the device is in place, medication (freezing) is delivered through the device to the mucus membrane over the sphenopalatine ganglion. The procedure will take only a few minutes and the patient normally has some or complete pain relief within a few minutes. During the procedure the patient may experience a bad taste in their throat and may feel facial numbness. Watery eyes and flushed cheeks are normal responses to this procedure.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS:

1. It is possible to be allergic to any drug. Although a reaction is remote since the drugs aren't injecting directly into the blood stream, it is still possible. Reactions to the injection will usually occur immediately.
2. It is also possible that you may experience a "vasovagal" or fainting-type reaction to this procedure, which may include such symptoms as light headedness, nausea, vomiting or feeling hot or cold. This reaction could happen right away or be delayed somewhat.
3. It is possible that you may notice blood in the mucosal lining of the nasal passage.

FOLLOWING THE PROCEDURE:

Following the procedure, you should experience pain relief almost immediately. The facial area can feel numb or may tingle (the same as when your limb 'falls asleep'). Every person is different, but we typically expect at least one-month pain relief on the first treatment. If you only experience good pain relief that lasts less than this, follow up with your doctor and we may want you to return for repeat procedure using cortisone / steroid as well as the freezing. The effects from this procedure are cumulative meaning you may need a number of these injections before we start to see longer term results.