

# Lumbar Sympathetic Block

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The sympathetic chain is a grouping of nerves that are located on either side of the spine.

The sympathetic block, is an injection of anesthetic solution that increases the blood flow to the legs.

A lumbar sympathetic block is done to provide pain relief; it may also help reduce swelling, sweating and colour changes in the legs, and help you move around better.

The information in this handout is to help you prepare for your lumbar sympathetic block, or injection.

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## Before your appointment

- If you are taking blood thinning and/or antiplatelet medication, ask the doctor or nurse for instructions, **at least 2 weeks before the procedure.**
- If you are unwell, have a fever or are on antibiotics please call us at the Michael G. DeGroot Pain Clinic 905-521-2100, extension 44621.
- Please have a light meal and drink before your appointment.
- If you are an insulin dependent diabetic, do not change your normal eating patterns and take your routine medication.
- Come to the Pain Clinic at the time written on your appointment card.
- Bring a list of your medications to every appointment.
- Let us know if you have an allergy to x-ray dye.
- An x-ray may be taken. If you are of child-bearing age, please let us know if you could be pregnant.
- Arrange to have a ride home. You may be in the Pain Clinic for about 45 to 60 minutes.

## When you first arrive at your appointment

- You will be asked to complete a pain level questionnaire.
- You may change into a patient gown.
- Please talk with the nurse about any pain that you are having, medications you are taking and your activity level.
- Have your blood pressure taken.
- Sign your consent form.
- Walk with a nurse into the procedure room.
- You may have an IV (intravenous) started.

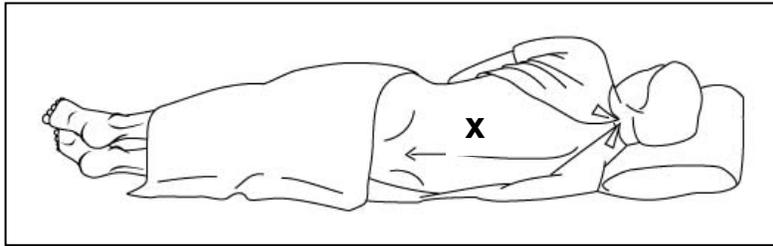
**It is very important that you are aware and understand fully the risks and benefits of the procedure before a decision is made.**

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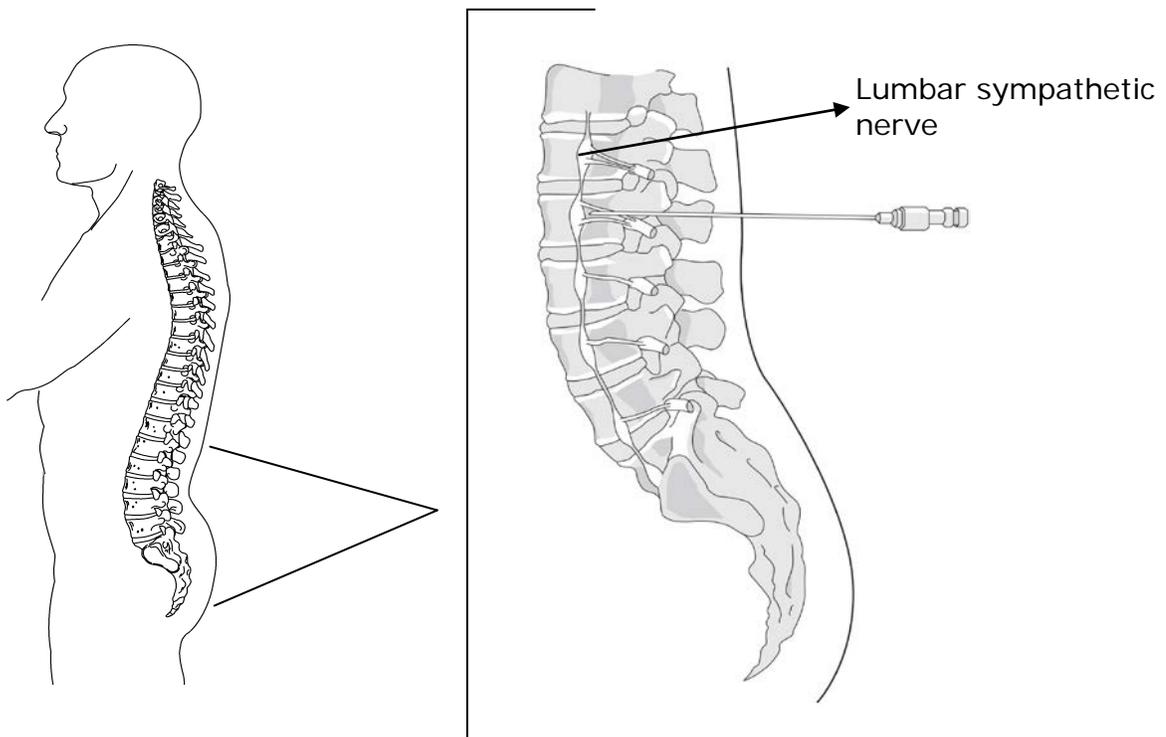
## During the injection

The injection takes about 5 minutes. A nurse will be with you at all times to explain to you what is happening. During the injection your pulse and blood pressure are checked.

You will lie on your abdomen or side, with the painful side up. The area on your back, where the injection goes in, is washed and medication is injected to numb the area. The **X** marks the spot where the injection is given.



Using x-ray dye and x-ray, the location of the lumbar sympathetic nerves is identified. Then, a very fine needle is inserted and advanced to the target area. The freezing medication, a local anesthetic, is then injected. The freezing does not last too long. Sometimes a longer acting medication is used.



## After the injection

You will rest on a stretcher in the recovery area for about 10 minutes. A nurse will check your pulse and blood pressure.

After the injection, you will feel your leg getting warm and you may notice that your pain is gone or is less. You may feel some numbness or weakness in your leg. This usually doesn't last very long, however, please tell your nurse. Your nurse will need to help you so you do not fall.

You should have someone else drive you home.

If the injection works well for you, your doctor will talk with you about having more injections. These will be done periodically if possible. The doctor will then reassess your condition and make recommendations for future treatments.

## When you get home

- You can get back to your normal activities, work and exercises. It is okay to attend physiotherapy.
- If you have a bandage, take it off when you go to bed.
- Do not apply heat to the injection site.
- Do not soak in a tub bath, swimming pool or hot tub for 24 hours after the injection.

## Call us if you have:

- a fever greater than 38°C or 100.4°F
- redness at the injection site
- new numbness or severe weakness the next day
- a very rare complication is pink or red urine – call us if you see this.

**Michael G. DeGroot Pain Clinic  
McMaster University Medical Centre  
905-521-2100, extension 44621**