



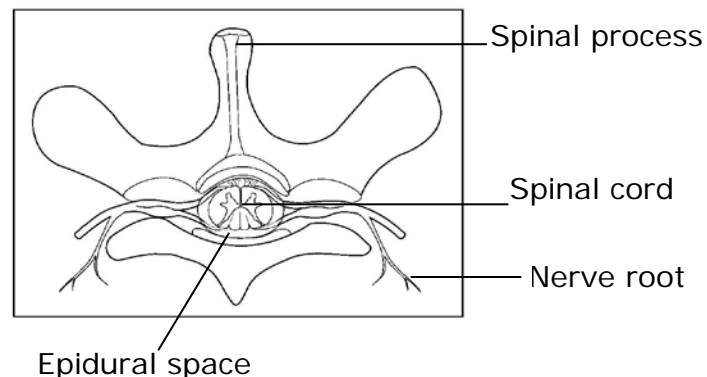
# Nerve Root Block

Diagnostic Imaging  
Hamilton General Hospital  
905-521-2100, ext. 46514

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## What is a Nerve Root Block?

It is a procedure to check a specific nerve in your back. The purpose of the procedure is to see if “freezing” the nerve root reduces or takes away your pain. This will help your doctor to decide on how to treat you.



## Before the procedure

- Drink and eat as usual. If you have diabetes and you take insulin, take your insulin and eat as usual.
- Arrange to have a ride home. You will be in the Diagnostic Imaging Department for about 90 minutes.
- **Do not take your pain medication.** It is important that you have your usual pain at the time of the procedure.

### Medication

- Take all of your other medications as prescribed.
- If you take blood thinners such as warfarin (Coumadin®), heparin, Plavix®, Aggrenox® or Ticlid®:
  - Ask the doctor who prescribed these medications for instructions on any changes that are needed before your procedure.
  - If you are taking warfarin, your referring doctor will stop this medication several days before your procedure. During this time, you may be switched to another medication.
  - If you have not heard from your referring doctor one week before your procedure, please call his or her office.
- Stop taking ASA (acetylsalicylic acid) 5 days before your procedure.

## When you first arrive for your procedure

Go to the reception desk in the Diagnostic Imaging Department on the Main Level.

You will:

- change into a patient gown
- talk with the nurse about any pain that you are having, medications you are taking and your activity level

Your doctor will explain the risks and benefits of this procedure. Ask your doctor questions before you sign the consent form if you do not understand the risks and benefits.

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## During the procedure

- You will lie on your stomach on the x-ray table. The doctor will freeze your skin and deeper tissues at the level of the nerve block. The freezing is like the freezing your dentist uses on your teeth.
- A tiny needle is put into the area of the nerve root and a small amount of freezing is injected. This is usually not painful, but you may feel warm.
- A small amount of x-ray dye may be injected to check the needle position.
- Steroid medication may be injected for longer term pain relief.
- The procedure takes about 10 to 30 minutes. The staff will ask you to get up and walk around. You will be asked if your pain has gone away.
- The freezing may last from 10 minutes to 3 hours.

## After the procedure

- You will be given a pain sheet to document your pain level after the injection. Keep the pain sheet and return it to your doctor at your next visit.
- A nurse or technologist will show you how to complete the pain sheet.

## Side effects

- Pain, numbness, itchiness or a burning sensation may occur at the injection site or down your leg.
- Backache – apply ice to the injection site for 20 minutes every hour if needed. Wrap the ice pack in a towel before you apply it.
- Bruising, soreness, and swelling at the injection sites may occur and should be temporary.

## When you get home

- Remove your bandage when you go to bed.
- Do not soak in a tub bath, swimming pool or hot tub for 24 hours after the injection.
- You can get back to your normal activities and exercises the next day.
- Take pain medication as needed.
- Use an ice pack wrapped in a towel for discomfort. Keep the ice pack on for only 20 minutes every hour, if needed for the next several hours.

## Call your family doctor if you have:

- a headache that lasts or increases in severity for 48 hours
- a fever greater than 38°C or 100.4°F
- redness at the injection site
- severe back pain
- have new numbness or severe weakness