About Your Celiac Plexus Block Procedure

This information will help you prepare for your celiac plexus block procedure at Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK), including what to expect before, during, and after your procedure.

The celiac (solar) plexus is a group of nerves in your abdomen (belly). It sends pain messages to the area of your brain where pain is detected. These pain messages are sent from your:

- Pancreas
- Liver
- Kidneys
- Gall bladder
- Spleen
- Bowels (intestines)

The Celiac Plexus Block Procedure

A celiac plexus block is an injection of a medication, such as alcohol, that stops these nerves from sending pain messages to your brain. This can help treat pain in your upper abdomen. Your doctor may recommend that you have a celiac plexus block if you:

- Have side effects from common pain medications.
- Do not get enough pain relief from common pain medication(s).

Possible complications

Rare complications of the celiac plexus block include:
• Injury to major blood vessels, nerves, or your kidneys.
• Partial collapse of your lung.
• Injection of the nerve block drug into a blood vessel.
• Weakness of your legs.
• Bowel or bladder problems.
• Allergic reactions to medications or dye used for the procedure.

Your doctor will discuss these with you before your procedure.

**Before Your Procedure**

**Ask about your medications**

You may need to stop taking some of your medications before your procedure. Talk with your doctor about which medications are safe for you to stop taking. We have included some common examples below.

- If you take medication to thin your blood, ask the doctor who prescribes it for you when to stop taking it. Some examples are warfarin (Coumadin®), dalteparin (Fragmin®), heparin, tinzaparin (Innohep®), enoxaparin (Lovenox®), clopidogrel (Plavix®), and cilostazol (Pletal®).
- Please review the information in the resource *Common Medications Containing Aspirin and Other Nonsteroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)*. It includes important information about medications you’ll need to avoid before your procedure and what medications you can take instead.

**Arrange for someone to take you home**

You must have someone 18 years or older take you home after your procedure. If you don’t have anyone, call one of the agencies below. They will provide someone to accompany you home; however, there is usually a charge for this service and you will also need to provide transportation.

In New York:

Partners in Care 888-735-8913

Prime Care 212-944-0244
In New York or New Jersey:

Caring People 877-227-4649

**Have a blood test before your procedure**

Your doctor or nurse will schedule you to have a blood test a few days before your procedure to check the cells that help your blood clot (platelets).

**Tell us if you’re sick**

If you have a temperature of 100.4° F (38° C) or higher the day before your procedure, please call your doctor’s office.

**Note the time of your procedure**

A clerk from the Admitting Office will call you after 2:00 pm the day before your procedure. He or she will tell you what time you should arrive at the hospital for your procedure. If you are scheduled for your procedure on a Monday, you will be called on the Friday before. If you do not receive a call by 7:00 pm, please call 212-639-5014.

The day of your procedure, you will go to either the Surgical Day Hospital or the Presurgical Center. Both locations are at 1275 York Avenue between East 67th and East 68th streets.

- Surgical Day Hospital (SDH)  
  M elevator to 2nd floor
- Presurgical Center (PSC)  
  B elevator to 6th floor

**The Day of Your Procedure**

Do not eat or drink anything 6 hours before your procedure. This includes water, hard candy, and gum.

**Things to remember**

- Take only the medications your doctor told you to take the morning of your procedure. Take them with a few sips of water.
If you take medications for breakthrough pain, bring it with you.

Where to park
Parking at the main hospital is available in the garage on East 66th Street between York and First Avenues. To reach the garage, enter East 66th Street from York Avenue. The garage is located about a quarter of a block in from York Avenue, on the right-hand (north) side of the street. There is a pedestrian tunnel that goes from the garage into the hospital. If you have questions about prices, call 212-639-2338.

There are also other garages located on East 69th Street between First and Second Avenues, East 67th Street between York and First Avenues, and East 65th Street between First and Second Avenues.

What to expect
Your doctor will explain the procedure to you and answer any questions you may have. He or she will ask you to sign a consent form.

When it’s time for your procedure, you will be brought into the procedure room and helped onto an exam table. A member of your anesthesia team will place an intravenous (IV) catheter into a vein, usually in your hand or arm. At first, you will receive fluids through the IV, but it will be used later to give you anesthesia (medication to make you sleep during your procedure). Once you are asleep, your doctor will start your procedure.

During Your Procedure
You will lie on your stomach on the table with a pillow under your hips. Your back will be cleaned and you will get an injection to numb the area about half way up your back. Your doctor will use x-rays to guide the needle that has the block. He or she will then inject the medication into the area of your celiac plexus. The needle will then be removed and a bandage (Band-Aid®) will be put on the site.

Your procedure will take about 90 minutes.

After Your Procedure
In the hospital

You will be taken to the Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU), where your nurse will monitor your temperature, heart rate, breathing, and blood pressure. You will stay in the PACU until you are fully awake.

When you wake up you may:

- Feel dizzy for a moment
- Have a full and warm feeling in your abdomen
- Feel nauseous, may vomit, or both
- Feel drowsy or confused. You’ll stay in the recovery room until this passes

Your nurse will review your discharge instructions with you and your caregiver before you go home. You can resume taking your pain medication right after your procedure. Your doctor or nurse will tell you how to slowly lower your pain medication based on how well the block relieves your pain.

At home

- Your back may feel sore for a few days in the area where the needle was placed.
- You may have watery, loose bowel movements (diarrhea) for 3 to 5 days.
- Do not drive or use heavy machinery for 24 hours after your procedure.
- Do not drink alcohol for 24 hours after your procedure.
- You can take the Band-Aid® off the night of or the morning after the block.
- You can shower the day after your procedure.

One of your healthcare providers from the Pain Service will call you in 2 to 3 business days to see how you’re feeling.

Pain management

- You may have more pain for 24 hours after the procedure. You may have to take extra doses of your medication for breakthrough pain for a day or two. If the pain continues for more than 48 hours, call your doctor.
- It may be a few days or more before you feel the full effects of the block. Keep taking your pain medication as prescribed. Your doctor or nurse will tell you how to slowly lower your pain medication based on how well the block relieves your pain.

Results with the celiac plexus block vary. The block can last several weeks to several months. When it wears off, your doctor will discuss other options with you.

Call Your Doctor or Nurse if:

- Your pain changes within 24 to 48 hours after your procedure
- You have redness or swelling at the injection site
- You have a temperature of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher
- You have any problems
- You have any questions or concerns

You can reach us Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM at 212-639-6851. After 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on holidays, call our paging service at 917-314-3477.

If you have any questions or concerns, talk with a member of your healthcare team. You can reach them Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM at ____________________. After 5:00 PM, during the weekend, and on holidays, please call____________________. If there’s no number listed, or you’re not sure, call 212-639-2000.

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