About Your Celiac Plexus Block Procedure

This information will help you get ready 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 your brain. 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 (shot) of a medication that stops these nerves from feeling pain. 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.
- Don’t get enough pain relief from common pain medication(s).

While problems with the celiac plexus block are rare, they may include:

- Injury to major blood vessels, nerves, or your kidneys.
- Partial collapse of your lung.
- Injection of the nerve block medication into a blood vessel.
- Weakness in your legs.
- Bowel or bladder problems.
- Allergic reactions to medications or dye used during 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 healthcare provider about which medications are safe for you to stop taking. We’ve included some common examples below.

**Blood thinners**

Blood thinners are medications that affect the way your blood clots. If you take blood thinners, ask the healthcare provider performing your procedure what to do. They may recommend you stop taking the medication. This will depend on the type of procedure you’re having and the reason you’re taking blood thinners.

Examples of common blood thinners are listed below. There are others, so be sure your care team knows all the medications you take. **Do not stop taking your blood thinner without talking with a member of your care team.**

- Apixaban (Eliquis®)
- Aspirin
- Celecoxib (Celebrex®)
- Meloxicam (Mobic®)
- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs
- Cilostazol (Pletal®)
- Clopidogrel (Plavix®)
- Dabigatran (Pradaxa®)
- Dalteparin (Fragmin®)
- Dipyridamole (Persantine®)
- Edoxaban (Savaysa®)
- Enoxaparin (Lovenox®)
- Fondaparinux (Arixtra®)
- Heparin (shot under your skin)

(NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®) and naproxen (Aleve®)
- Pentoxifylline (Trental®)
- Prasugrel (Effient®)
- Rivaroxaban (Xarelto®)
- Sulfasalazine (Azulfidine®, Sulfazine®)
- Ticagrelor (Brilinta®)
- Tinzaparin (Innohep®)
- Warfarin (Jantoven®, Coumadin®)

Read *Common Medications Containing Aspirin, Other Nonsteroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs), or Vitamin E* (www.mskcc.org/pe/common_meds). It has information about medications you’ll need to avoid before your procedure.

**Medications for diabetes**

Before your procedure, talk with the healthcare provider who prescribes your insulin or other medications for diabetes. They may need to change the dose of the medications you take for diabetes. Ask them what you
should do the morning of your procedure.

Your care team will check your blood sugar levels during your procedure.

**Diuretics (water pills)**
A diuretic is a medication that makes you urinate (pee) more often. Hydrochlorothiazide (Microzide®) and furosemide (Lasix®) are common diuretics.

If you take any diuretics, ask the healthcare provider doing your procedure what to do. You may need to stop taking them the day of your procedure.

**Have a blood test before your procedure**
Your healthcare provider will schedule you to have a blood test a few days before your procedure to check the cells that help your blood clot (platelets).

**Take devices off your skin**
You may wear certain devices on your skin. Before your scan or procedure, device makers recommend you take off your:

- Continuous glucose monitor (CGM)
- Insulin pump

Talk with your healthcare provider about scheduling your appointment closer to the date you need to change
your device. Make sure you have an extra device with you to put on after your scan or procedure.

You may not be sure how to manage your glucose while your device is off. If so, before your appointment, talk with the healthcare provider who manages your diabetes care.

**Arrange for someone to take you home**

You must have a responsible care partner take you home after your procedure. A responsible care partner is someone who can help you get home safely. They should be able to contact your care team if they have any concerns. Make sure to plan this before the day of your procedure.

If you don’t have a responsible care partner to take you home, call one of the agencies below. They’ll send someone to go home with you. There’s a charge for this service, and you’ll need to provide transportation. It’s OK to use a taxi or car service, but you still need a responsible care partner with you.

**Agencies in New York**

VNS Health: 888-735-8913

Caring People: 877-227-

**Agencies in New Jersey**

Caring People: 877-227-4649
Tell us if you’re sick

If you get sick (including having a fever, cold, sore throat, or flu) before your procedure, call your IR doctor. You can reach them Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

After 5 p.m., during the weekend, and on holidays, call 212-639-2000. Ask for the Interventional Radiology fellow on call.

Note the time of your appointment

A staff member from Interventional Radiology will call you 2 business days (Monday through Friday) before your procedure. If your procedure is scheduled on a Monday, you’ll be called on the Thursday before. If you don’t get a call by noon the business day before your procedure, call 646-677-7001.

The staff member will tell you what time you should arrive at the hospital for your procedure. You’ll need to go to:

Presurgical Center (PSC) on the 2nd floor
1275 York Avenue
(between East 67th and East 68th Streets)
Take the M elevators to 2nd floor
If you need to cancel your procedure for any reason, call the healthcare provider who scheduled it for you.

**The Day Before Your Procedure**

**Instructions for eating before your procedure**

Do not eat anything after midnight (12 a.m.) the night before your procedure. This includes hard candy and gum.

**The Day of Your Procedure**

**Instructions for drinking before your procedure**

You can drink a total of 12 ounces of water between midnight (12 a.m.) and 2 hours before your scheduled arrival time. **Do not drink anything else.**

Do not drink anything starting 2 hours before your scheduled arrival time. This includes water.

**Things to remember**

- Take only the medications your healthcare provider told you to take the morning of your procedure. Take
them with a few sips of water.

- Don’t apply cream or petroleum jelly (Vaseline®). You can use deodorant and light moisturizers.
- Don’t wear eye makeup.
- Remove any jewelry, including body piercings.
- Leave all valuables, such as credit cards and jewelry, at home.
- If you wear contact lenses, wear your glasses instead, if possible. If you don’t have glasses, please bring a case for your contacts.

What to bring with you

- A list of the medications you take at home
- Medications for breathing problems (such as inhalers), medications for chest pain, or both
- A case for your glasses or contacts
- Your Health Care Proxy form, if you have completed one
- If you use a CPAP or BiPAP machine to sleep at night, please bring your machine with you, if possible. If you can’t bring your machine with you, we will give you one to use while you’re in the hospital.
Where to park
MSK’s parking garage is on East 66th Street between York and 1st avenues. If you have questions about prices, call 212-639-2338.

To get to the garage, turn onto East 66th Street from York Avenue. The garage is about a quarter of a block in from York Avenue. It’s on the right (north) side of the street. There’s a tunnel you can walk through that connects the garage to the hospital.

There are other parking garages on:

- East 69th Street between 1st and 2nd avenues.
- East 67th Street between York and 1st avenues.
- East 65th Street between 1st and 2nd avenues.

Where to go
Please arrive at the main building of MSK at 1275 York Avenue between East 67th and East 68th Streets. Take the M elevators to the 2nd floor. Enter through the glass doors and check in at the desk.

What to expect
Once you arrive at the hospital, doctors, nurses, and other staff members will ask you to state and spell your name and date of birth many times. This is for your safety. People with the same or similar names may be
having procedures on the same day.

Your doctor will explain the procedure to you and answer any questions you may have. They will ask you to sign a consent form.

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

**During Your Procedure**

You’ll lie on your stomach on the table with a pillow under your hips. Your back will be cleaned, and you’ll get an injection to numb the area about half way up your back. Your doctor will use x-rays to guide the needle with the block. They will then inject the medication into the area of your celiac plexus. Your doctor will remove the needle and place a bandage (Band-Aid®) on the site.

Your procedure will take about 90 minutes.
After Your Procedure

In the hospital

When you wake up after your procedure, you will be in the Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU). A nurse will be monitoring your body temperature, pulse, blood pressure, and oxygen levels. You will stay in the PACU until you’re fully awake.

When you wake up you may:

- Feel dizzy for a moment.
- Have a full and warm feeling in your abdomen.
- Feel nauseous, feel like you’re going to throw up, or both.
- Feel drowsy or confused. You’ll stay in the recovery room until you feel better.

Your nurse will review your discharge instructions with you and your caregiver before you go home.

At home

- You can continue taking your pain medication right after your procedure.
- Your back may feel sore for a few days in the area where the needle was placed.
- You may have diarrhea (loose or watery bowel
movements) for 3 to 5 days.

- Don’t drive or use heavy machinery for 24 hours after your procedure.
- Don’t drink alcohol for 24 hours after your procedure.
- You can take the Band-Aid® off the night of or the morning after your procedure.
- You can shower the day after your procedure.

One of your healthcare providers from the Pain Service will call you 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 1 to 2 days. If the pain continues for over 48 hours (2 days), 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 healthcare provider will tell you how to slowly lower your pain medication based on how well the block relieves your pain.

The celiac plexus block works differently for everyone. The block can last several weeks to several months.
When it wears off, your doctor will discuss other options with you.

**When to Call Your Healthcare Provider**

Call your healthcare provider if you have any of the following:

- You have a fever of 100.4° F (38° C) or higher.
- You have changes to your pain within 24 to 48 hours (1 to 2 days) after your procedure.
- You have redness or swelling at the injection site.
- You have any problems.
- You have questions or concerns.

**Contact Information**

If you have any questions or concerns, call the Anesthesia Pain Service at 212-639-6851. You can reach a staff member Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. After 4:00 p.m., during the weekend, or on holidays, call 212-639-2000 and ask for the anesthesia pain person on call.