Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

How To Get Ready for Your Pain Procedure With the Anesthesia Pain Service

This information will help you get ready for your procedure with the Anesthesia Pain Service at MSK.

Read this information carefully. If you have questions or concerns, tell your pain care team **before** the day of your procedure. Their phone number is at the end of this resource.

1 week before your pain procedure

Ask about your medicines

You may need to stop taking some of your medicines before your procedure. Talk with your pain healthcare provider about which medicines you take and when to stop them.

Contact your pain healthcare provider if your medicine regimen changes after you talk with them. They need to know:

- If you start or stop taking any medicines.
- If the dose of any of your medicines changes.
- If the schedule for taking any of your medicines changes.

If you wait until the day of your pain procedure to tell them about a change, your procedure may be canceled.

The rest of this section describes common medicines and what to do if you're taking them.

Blood thinners

Blood thinners (anticoagulants) are medicines that change how your blood clots.

If you take a blood thinner, you must stop taking it before your pain procedure. Ask the healthcare provider who prescribes your blood thinner when to stop taking it. **Do not stop taking your blood thinner without talking to a member of your care team.**

You might need a clearance letter from the healthcare provider who prescribes your blood thinner. Your pain healthcare provider will tell you if you do. A clearance letter is a letter saying it's safe for you to have the pain procedure.

This table lists examples of common blood thinners. There are others, so be sure your care team knows all the medicines you take.

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

Antibiotics

Antibiotics are medicines to treat an infection. Tell your pain healthcare provider if you're taking an antibiotic. Your pain procedure may need to be rescheduled to avoid an infection.

Vaccines

Tell your pain healthcare provider if you have gotten or are planning to get any vaccines within 2 weeks of your pain procedure. This includes the 2 weeks before and the 2 weeks after your procedure. Your pain procedure may need to be rescheduled.

Insulin or other medicines for diabetes

If you're getting a steroid injection, it can raise your blood sugar levels for a short time. If you take insulin or other medicines for diabetes, you may need to change your dose. Ask the healthcare provider who prescribes your diabetes medicines how to plan or adjust for the days before and after your procedure.

Have lab work done, if needed

You may need lab work done before your procedure. If you do, your care team will give you more information.

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: 877-227-4649

Agencies in New Jersey

Caring People: 877-227-4649

Tell your pain healthcare provider if you feel sick

Tell your pain healthcare provider if you have cold or flu-like symptoms, such as a fever or body aches. Your pain procedure may need to be rescheduled.

1 day before your pain procedure

If you have a fever of 100.5 °F (38 °C) or higher, call the healthcare provider who scheduled your procedure.

Instructions for eating

If you're getting anesthesia (medicine to make you sleep) during your procedure, you need to stop eating and drinking at certain times.

☐ If you are not getting anesthesia during your procedure

You do not need to change your diet before your procedure. You can eat and drink like usual.

☐ If you are getting anesthesia during your procedure

Important: If you take a GLP-1 medicine, do not follow these instructions. Follow the instructions in *Eating and Drinking Before Your Surgery or Procedure When Taking GLP-1 Medicines* (www.mskcc.org/pe/eat-drink-glp1) instead.



Stop eating at midnight (12 a.m.) the night before your surgery or procedure. This includes hard candy and gum.

Your healthcare provider may have given you different instructions for when to stop eating. If so, follow their instructions. Some people need to fast (not eat) for longer before their surgery or procedure.

The day of your pain procedure

Instructions for drinking

☐ If you are not getting anesthesia during your procedure

You do not need to change your diet before your procedure. You can eat and drink like usual.

☐ If you are getting anesthesia during your procedure

Important: If you take a GLP-1 medicine, do not follow these instructions. Follow the instructions in *Eating and Drinking Before Your Surgery or Procedure When Taking GLP-1 Medicines* (www.mskcc.org/pe/eat-drink-glp1) instead.

Between midnight (12 a.m.) and 2 hours before your arrival time, only drink the liquids on the list below. Do not eat or drink anything else. Stop drinking 2 hours before your arrival time.

- Water.
- Clear apple juice, clear grape juice, or clear cranberry juice.
- Gatorade or Powerade.
- Black coffee or plain tea. It's OK to add sugar. Do not add anything else.
  - Do not add any amount of any type of milk or creamer. This includes plant-based milks and creamers.
  - Do not add flavored syrup.

If you have diabetes, pay attention to the amount of sugar in your drinks. It will be easier to control your blood sugar levels if you include sugar-free, low-sugar, or no added sugar versions of these drinks.

It's helpful to stay hydrated before surgeries and procedures, so drink if you are thirsty. Do not drink more than you need. You will get intravenous (IV) fluids

during your surgery or procedure.



Stop drinking 2 hours before your arrival time. This includes water.

Your healthcare provider may have given you different instructions for when to stop drinking. If so, follow their instructions.

Instructions for taking your medicines

If your healthcare provider gave you different instructions, follow those instead.

- If you take a blood thinner, do not take it the morning of your procedure.
- If you take other medicines, take them like usual.

Things to remember

- Wear something comfortable and loose-fitting. It's best to wear dark-covered clothing over the procedure area. The liquid your care team will use to clean the area can stain light-colored clothes.
- Plan to avoid driving for 24 hours (1 day) after your procedure. It's also best to avoid activities you need to be alert for.

What to bring

- A list of all your medicines, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, patches, and creams.
- Any pain medicines you're taking.

What to expect

Many staff members will ask you to say and spell your name and birth date. This is for your safety. People with the same or similar names may have a procedure on the same day.

A member of the pain team will talk with you about the procedure and answer

your questions. You'll sign a consent form. This is a form that says you agree to the procedure and understand its risks and benefits.

A doctor or nurse on your pain care team might also:

- Ask for the name and contact information of the person who will take you home after your procedure.
- Ask you to take a urine (pee) pregnancy test before your procedure. They'll only do this if you're between 11 and 55 and can get pregnant.
- Ask you to take off anything that might get in the way during the procedure, such as your jewelry or belt.
- Ask you to change into a hospital gown.

During your pain procedure

When it's time for your procedure, a member of your care team will help you onto the procedure table. They'll help you move so you're in the right position for your procedure.

Next, your pain healthcare provider will find the place for the injection. They will use fluoroscopy (a type of X-ray) or an ultrasound machine. They'll put paper drapes over the area and clean it with a tinted cleaning solution.

Most people get an injection (shot) of local anesthetic. Local anesthetic is medicine to numb an area of your body. The shot will feel like a tiny pinprick and then a burning sensation.

Once the area is numb, the doctor will inject the medicine. They'll place a small bandage over the procedure site.

After your pain procedure

Your pain may be better for a few hours after your procedure. This is because the local anesthetic is still working. It's normal for your pain to come back for up to a week while the medicine starts to work. Talk with your pain provider about adjusting your pain medicine to help with your symptoms.

What to do at home

For the first 24 hours (1 day) after your procedure:

- Do not drive.
- Do not do activities you need to be alert for.
- Do not have drinks with alcohol.
- Do not take the bandage off your injection site.
- Do not take a shower, bath, or swim. Keep the bandage dry.
- Take your pain medicine following your care team's instructions.

You can take a shower or bath 24 hours after your procedure. Take off the bandage first. You do not need to put another one on afterward.

When to call your pain healthcare provider

Call your pain healthcare provider if:

- You have a fever of 100.5 °F (38.5 °C) or higher.
- Your pain gets worse after 48 hours (2 days) or moves to another area.
- You have any new symptoms, such as shooting pain, burning, or tightness in your back or legs.
- Your injection site is red, swollen, or leaking liquid.
- You start having trouble controlling when you pass gas or have a bowel movement (poop).
- You start having trouble controlling when you urinate (pee).
- You have any unexplained or unexpected problems.

Contact information

Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., call 212-639-6851. After 4 p.m., during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000. Ask for the anesthesia pain person on call.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

How To Get Ready for Your Pain Procedure With the Anesthesia Pain Service - Last updated on April 2, 2026
All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center