



Intercostal Nerve Block

What is an Intercostal Nerve Block?

An Intercostal Nerve Block is an injection of anesthetic medication onto intercostal nerves.

What are intercostal nerves?

Intercostal nerves are nerves which leave the middle of the spine and travel around to the front of the chest under the ribs. The nerves are responsible for controlling sensation to the chest wall. Blocking these nerves can reduce pain in the chest and help determine the cause of your pain.

What happens during the procedure?

You will lie on your stomach and 3 or 4 thin needles will be placed into your back under x-ray guidance under the appropriate ribs.

Who can benefit from Intercostal Nerve Blocks?

Patients with chest wall pain can benefit from Intercostal Nerve Blocks. Other painful conditions such as rib fractures can also obtain relief.

How often can these injections be given?

Your doctor will determine how many injections should be given, however, 5 to 6 injections can usually be given per year. Your relief from each injection will determine how many injections can be given.

What are the possible side effects?

As with any procedure, a small number of patients may experience side effects which will be explained in more detail by your doctor. A few potential side effects are listed below, however, the vast majority of patients experience no side effects at all.

- Bleeding
- Infection
- Nerve damage
- Lack of relief
- Localized pain at the injection site
- Damage to the lung or problems breathing

What if I am taking blood thinning medications? (Eg., Coumadin, Plavix, Ticlid, Aggrenox):

Coumadin must be stopped 5 days before your procedure and you must have some laboratory studies taken immediately before your

procedure (Eg., PT, INR). Your doctor may ask you to stop other medications before your procedure as well.

Does the injection hurt?

The area is numbed with local anesthetic before the injection, thus most patients experience only moderate discomfort.

Will I have any restrictions?

You should take it easy on the day of an injection. Driving is generally not permitted on the day of a procedure. Otherwise no restrictions are present.

What if I have other questions?

Your doctor will be happy to answer any further questions you may have either before or on the day of your procedure.