



Lumbar Sympathetic Block

What is a Lumbar Sympathetic Block (LSB)?

A LSB is an injection of anesthetic medication onto nerves in the spine called the lumbar sympathetic nerves.

What are lumbar sympathetic nerves?

Lumbar sympathetic nerves are nerves which are next to the lower spinal bones. The nerves are responsible for controlling the amount of blood flow to the lower extremities. Blocking these nerves generally increases the amount of blood which goes to the legs and feet. These are not the nerves which control sensation or strength to the legs, therefore, blocking these nerves does not usually weaken your legs.

Who can benefit from LSBs?

Patients with leg pain as a result of certain conditions can benefit from LSBs. Patients with poor blood flow may also be candidates for LSBs in order to increase blood flow to the legs and feet.

How do LSBs help?

LSBs can reduce pain by improving blood flow in the affected extremity. In certain pain conditions the lumbar

sympathetic nerves do not function properly and blocking them can provide pain relief and allow patients to perform physical therapy. Your doctor will determine whether you should participate in physical therapy after your LSBs.

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

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. You may be asked to participate in physical therapy after the procedure.