



How you want to be treated.

Transforaminal Nerve Root Block

Your appointment for a transforaminal nerve root block:

Date: _____

Time: _____

Plan to arrive 15 minutes before your appointment. When you arrive, check in with the receptionist.

Please call us 7 days (1 week) before your appointment to confirm the date and time. Call 604-806-8824 and speak to the receptionist.

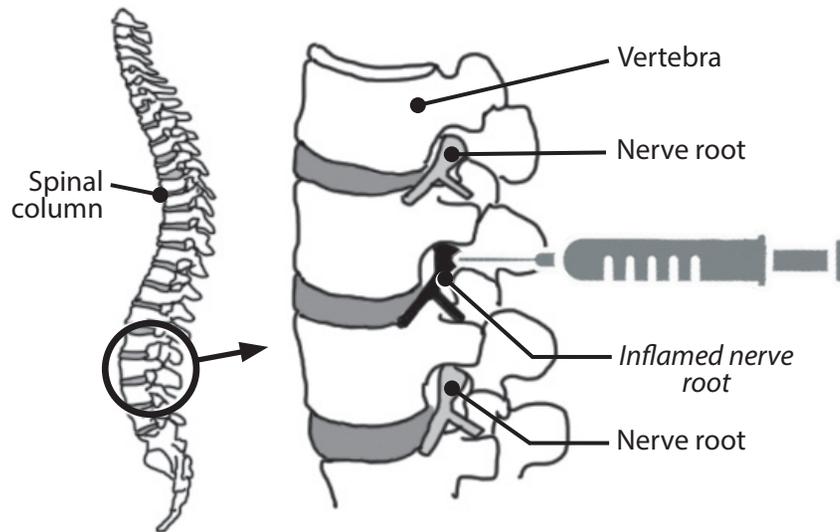
St. Paul's Hospital,
1081 Burrard Street,
Vancouver, BC

Surgical Day Care
3rd floor Providence Building

Outpatient Interventional Pain Clinic
Unit 8D, 8th floor Providence Building

What is a transforaminal nerve root block?

A *transforaminal nerve root block* is an injection of a local anesthetic (freezing) with or without a steroid (a strong anti-inflammatory medicine), into the opening where the nerve root comes out of the spinal column. This opening is known as a foramen.



Why is a transforaminal nerve root block done?

A transforaminal nerve root block is usually done to diagnose or treat pain in your arm, chest or leg that follows the path of a single nerve.

What are the possible side effects or risks of a transforaminal nerve root block?

As with most medical procedures, there are some risks when you have this nerve block. Serious side effects are rare.

Some possible side effects include:

- discomfort, bleeding or bruising from the injection
- allergic reaction to the medications
- temporary numbness or weakness in the arm, chest or leg from the local anesthetic. This goes away in a few hours.
- pain symptoms do not change, or get worse
- nerve damage
- infection

The steroid can also have side effects. It can increase your blood sugar for up to 2 weeks. Patients with diabetes should monitor their blood sugars closely.

The number of steroid injections is usually limited because there can be serious side effects from using steroids for too long. Possible side effects from using steroids over time include:

- osteoporosis (bone becomes fragile)
- glaucoma (increased pressure in the eye causing loss of sight)
- changes in sleep patterns and mood
- skin changes
- fluid retention
- weight gain
- swelling of the face

Steroid side effects, over time, *continued*

- heart disease
- high blood pressure
- diabetes

Who should NOT have a transforaminal nerve root block?

You should not have a transforaminal nerve root block if you are allergic to the medications used or have an untreated infection. The doctor will talk to you about the medications that will be used before the procedure.

How do you get ready for the procedure?

Take all your medications unless your doctor tells you to stop. Do not stop any medications without direction.

- **Make arrangements for someone to bring you home.**
- **You are not allowed to drive for 24 hours after your procedure.**
- Talk with the doctor about all the medications you take, including over-the-counter medicines and herbal supplements.
- If you take any *blood thinners*, talk to the doctor at least 2 weeks (14 days) before your procedure. Contact the pain clinic at least 1 week (7 days) before your appointment for directions.

Getting ready, *continued*

- Take all your other medications at their regular times before your procedure as directed by your doctor.
- Wear loose comfortable clothing that is easy to take off and put on. Wear low heeled, non-slip shoes.
- Do not wear scented products like perfume or aftershave.
- If you receive sedation, do not make any important decisions for 24 hours.

How long does the procedure take?

The actual injection takes a few minutes. You will need to be monitored after the procedure for safety reasons. Your entire appointment may take 2 to 3 hours.

What happens during the procedure?

- You may have a small intravenous (also called an "IV", pronounced *eye-vee*) inserted into your hand or arm. This is a tiny, soft plastic tube that goes into a vein.
- You may need to lie on your stomach or your side. The area of the injection will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution.
- You will be monitored throughout the procedure. X-ray or ultrasound may be used to identify the location for the nerve block.

During the procedure, *continued*

- The doctor may numb your skin and deeper tissues using a very thin needle with local anesthetic. You may feel some pressure during the procedure.
- Once the procedure is done, a small dressing or bandage may be placed over the injection site.

What should I expect after the procedure?

- You may feel some discomfort where the injection was done. This is usually caused by muscle spasms (tightness). If you have muscle spasms, put an ice or cold pack on the injection site for 15 minutes. Move it on and off as you need to during this time.
- You may notice your arm or leg feels weak, numb or heavy. Be careful when you get up after the procedure. Make sure someone is with you the first time you stand up.
- When you get home, take off the dressing or bandage.
- You can go back to your normal activities right away.
- You may shower after your procedure. Do not take a tub bath or use a pool or hot tub for 24 hours after your injection.
- Keep a diary of your pain after the injection. This will help you talk about the results of your injection with your doctor.

When do I need more help?

Contact your doctor or go to emergency if you notice:

- fever of 38.3 degrees Celsius or greater
- redness, warmth, swelling or pus at the injection site
- you have new arm or leg weakness
- rash or breathing problems

How do I contact the pain specialist?

Monday to Friday 8:00am to 4:00pm

- call **604-806-8824**.
- if no one answers, leave a message with a phone number we can use to reach you during these hours.

In case of emergency or serious side effects after hours and on weekends

- call St. Paul's Hospital at **604-682-2344**. Ask the operator to page the Acute Pain Service.

This material has been reviewed and approved by patients, families and staff.



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www.providencehealthcare.org