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NEUROSLEEP CENTER

Greater Occipital Nerve Block Patient Information

Occipital nerve block is a therapeutic procedure used to treat pain originating at the back of the head. It is performed through injection of steroids and a local anesthetic into the base of the skull, where the occipital nerves are located.

The steroid injected reduces the inflammation and swelling of tissue around the occipital nerves.

This may in turn reduce pain, and other symptoms caused by inflammation or irritation of the nerves and surrounding structures. GONB is used to treat the following:

- ✓ Headaches over the back of the head
- ✓ Tension headaches
- ✓ Cluster Headaches
- ✓ Nerve inflammation/Painful scalp
- ✓ migraine headaches, may respond to occipital nerve blocks.

Before getting Greater Occipital Nerve Block, tell your doctor if you:

The procedure is not recommended to anyone who is:

- ✓ Allergic to the medication
- ✓ On blood thinners
- ✓ Have an active infection
- ✓ Uncontrolled diabetes
- ✓ Heart disease

Medication Injected:

The injection consists of a local anesthetic and a steroid medication

Procedure:

During an occipital nerve block, an injection using a very fine needle is done at the back of the head, just above the neck, in the region where the nerve crosses the skull. The skin is numbed before the injection is done. The needle is placed near the nerve and pain-relieving medication is injected. Most often, a combination of a long-acting local anesthetic and a steroid anti-inflammatory drug are injected.



Risks and Side Effect

In general, this procedure is safe. However, with any procedure there are risks, side effects and possibility of complications. The most common side effect is temporary pain at the injection site. Other uncommon risks involve infection, bleeding, worsening of symptoms etc. Fortunately, serious side effects and complications are uncommon

Uncommon risks include bleeding (especially if on blood thinning medication), infection, pain, and nerve damage. The chance of side effects increases with additional occipital nerve block procedures.

The needle does not cross the skull, so there is no risk of spinal fluid leakage, meningitis, or brain or spinal cord injury. The nerve does not connect to any muscles, so weakness or change in facial expression does not occur.

What you should I expect after the occipital nerve block?

Immediately after the injection, you may feel that your pain may be gone or quite less. This is due to the local anesthetic injected. This will last only for a few hours. Your pain may return, and you may have a sore head for a day or two. This is due to the mechanical process of needle insertion as well as initial irritation from the steroid itself.

You should start noticing a more lasting pain relief starting the third day or so.

- ✓ Most patients can drive themselves home.
- ✓ We advise the patient to take it easy for several hours after the procedure.
- ✓ You may want to apply ice to the injected area.
- ✓ You can perform any activity you can tolerate.

Unless there are complications, you should be able to return to work the next day. The most common thing you may feel is a sore head at the injection site.

Call Your Doctor or Nurse if You

- Have a temperature of 100.4° F (38° C) or higher
- Have any of the following around the area where you got the shot:
 - Increased pain, swelling, tenderness, or redness
 - Skin irritation
 - Warmth, burning, or itching
- Develop any new or unexplained symptoms
 - Have any questions or concerns