Celiac Plexus Block

Information for patients and families

Read this information to learn:

• what is the celiac plexus
• what is a celiac plexus block
• what to expect
• what problems to watch for
• who to call if you have questions
What is the celiac plexus?
The celiac plexus is a network of nerves that runs through the abdomen (belly), including the pancreas.

What is a celiac plexus block?
Pain in the abdomen is transmitted (or passed) through the celiac plexus. A celiac plexus block uses alcohol to destroy the nerves that send pain messages to the brain from the abdomen. It may be done for people with chronic abdominal pain that is difficult to control, such as cancer and chronic pancreatitis.

Why do I need a celiac plexus block?
The celiac plexus block lowers or gets rid of the pain in your belly. You may also be able to take less pain medication.

What can I expect during the procedure?
1. We ask you to change into a patient gown.

2. A nurse assesses (checks) you and asks about your medical history. The nurse starts an Intravenous (IV) and during the procedure will keep checking your:
   • oxygen levels
   • heart rate
   • blood pressure
   • blood sugar (with a small needle prick in your finger)

3. We take you to the Interventional Radiology Suite where you are asked to lay down on the procedure table. You will be asked to lay on your stomach or back. The celiac plexus block is done with the help of the x-ray to guide the injection of the medications into the correct spot.
4. The nurse gives you pain and calming medication (sedative) through your IV.

5. The doctor uses a needle to give you numbing medicine in the skin in the area where the procedure will be done.

6. Once this area is numb, the doctor gives you a needle into the celiac plexus using the CT scan to guide them. The doctor then injects pure alcohol into the nerves to destroy them. You may feel intoxicated as you will receive the equivalent of 4 alcoholic beverages.

7. A small band aid will cover the needle puncture site and you return to Medical Imaging Day Unit (MIDU).

8. In the MIDU, a nurse monitors you until you are ready to go home.

You can expect to stay 4 hours after your procedure. A **family member or friend must take you home from the hospital.**

**What should I do when I go home?**

- Rest for the day once you get home.
- Eat and drink what you normally would.
- You can expect to have less pain after your block. Please talk with your doctor about how to cut down on your pain medications. Do not stop your pain medications all at once.

**Because you had a sedative:**

- Do not drive or handle heavy machinery for 24 hours
- Do not make financial or legal decisions
- Do not drink alcohol for 24 hours
What problems should I watch for?

Diarrhea

• Diarrhea may last 1 to 3 days. It usually goes away on its own. If it continues please see your referring doctor.

• Drink plenty of liquids (about 6 to 8 glasses) to keep hydrated.

Dizziness from low blood pressure

• Be careful when getting up from lying to a sitting position.

Hangover like symptoms

• The alcohol may make you feel drunk and this can give you a headache, nausea and vomiting. Hydrate well with 6 to 8 glasses of water and rest for several hours.

Who should I call if I have questions after my procedure?
If you have any questions or concerns, call your referring doctor’s office.