

Ganglion Impar Block

What is a ganglion impar nerve block?

A ganglion impar block is an injection of numbing and pain medicine that can help relieve cancer-related pelvic pain (area around pelvis), perineal pain (area around the genitals), and anorectal pain (anus and rectum). A ganglion is a place in the body where many nerves intersect or “bundle.”

The **ganglion impar**, also known as the ganglion of Walther or the sacrococcygeal ganglion, is a bundle of nerves that sits in front of the tailbone, but behind the rectum. Nerves from some parts of the lower pelvis and groin pass through this ganglion on their way to the brain, including nerves from: the lower part of the rectum, anal region, lower part of the urethra, vagina and vulva, scrotum, the area from the anus to the vagina or base of the testicles, and tailbone. During a ganglion impar block, a combination of numbing and pain medicine is injected directly into this bundle of nerves.

How is a ganglion impar block done?

To begin the procedure for your ganglion impar block, you will lie on your stomach on an x-ray table. The doctor will numb an area of skin over your lower tailbone with a local numbing medicine. Then, guided by an x-ray, they will:

- Insert a thin needle into the area around your tailbone between your buttocks along the vertebral body.
- Inject dye through this needle to confirm that the medicine will go to the correct spot in your body.
- After the medicine is injected, you may feel a warm or burning sensation in the area.

In most cases, the procedure takes less than 30-minutes and you can go home the same day.

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

How effective is the ganglion impar block?

Pain relief from a ganglion impar block may vary for each person, however, when effective, typical pain relief lasts up to 3 months.

If effective, this procedure can be repeated in the future once the pain relief has worn off. Pain relief may last longer with each repeat injection. Most people need a series of injections to continue the pain relief. Sometimes it takes only 2 injections, or sometimes it can take a series of several injections.

What are the risks?

As with any procedure, it is possible for complications to happen, however, the risk of complications from a ganglion impar block is very low. Possible side effects following this procedure may include:

- Bruising or soreness at the injection site (most common)
- Bleeding (uncommon)
- Infection (uncommon)
- Blood in your stool (uncommon)
- Rectal puncture or perforation of the rectum or bowel (uncommon)
- Nerve damage (uncommon)

What happens after the procedure?

Many patients experience immediate relief from the injection.

You can continue your regular diet and medicines immediately, but do not drive or do any rigorous physical activity for 24 hours after the procedure. You can return to your normal activities the next day.

If a steroid is used it can take 2 to 5 days after the procedure before the full effects are felt.

Is a ganglion impar block right for you?

A ganglion impar block may be right for you if you have chronic pelvic, perineal, or anorectal pain related to colorectal, bladder, perianal, prostate, cervix, ovarian, vagina, or vulvar cancer.

A ganglion impar nerve block can be considered in patients with uncontrolled pain or difficult to control cancer-related pain to the pelvic, perineal, or anorectal regions.

Studies have shown improved pain with no significant adverse (harmful) effects for patients with cancer-related pelvic, perineal, and anorectal pain who have undergone a ganglion impar block.

There is a better chance of a block relieving your pain if you have the procedure earlier in your illness. In patients with cancer-related pelvic, perineal, and anorectal pain, a ganglion impar block can provide:

- Better pain control
- Less opioid (narcotic) use
- Fewer opioid-related (narcotic) complications and side effects (such as constipation and sedation)
- Improved quality of life

If you have any questions about scheduling a ganglion impar block or if it is right for you, feel free to contact the Physical Medicine & Rehab Department's Outpatient James Clinic at Martha Morehouse at 614-366-8700 to schedule an appointment to discuss further.