

What to Expect with Your Sphenopalatine Ganglion Block

What is a Sphenopalatine Ganglion Block?

A ganglion is a collection of nerve cells that helps to regulate certain functions within your body. The sphenopalatine ganglion (SPG) is located in the back of the nose and plays a role in many types of headaches. Headache treatment by application of medication to the SPG has been done for over one hundred years. If the medication used is intended to temporarily block function of the SPG, this is called a SPG block or SPGB. If your healthcare provider decides that a SPGB is right for your condition, they should further clarify the procedure and answer any questions you may have before proceeding. You might expect the following.

How is a SPGB Accomplished?

When a SPGB was first performed, it was done using a long needle through the side of the face. Some practitioners still use this approach. More commonly, the procedure is performed by using a long, stiff, cotton-tipped applicator through the nose to apply medication to the appropriate area in the back of the nasal passage. This can be uncomfortable for patients, is often difficult or unsuccessful and can cause bleeding. Some people simply drip medicine into the nose hoping that it arrives at the correct location. There are several other methods that are less often utilized.

What is the *SphenoCath*™?

If your practitioner decides that a SPGB is right for you, they may decide to use the *SphenoCath*™. The patented *SphenoCath*™ is a small, soft tube specifically designed to be gently inserted into a patient's nose, as they lie on their back, and deliver medication precisely and consistently to the area of the SPG. The *SphenoCath*™ is not a headache treatment *per se*. It is a medication delivery device that transforms a SPGB into a quick, simple, comfortable procedure. If your practitioner consults with you about a SPGB and you decide on the procedure, your provider may use the *SphenoCath*™ to do the procedure.

What Should I Expect?

Sometimes providers pre-medicate with a topical anesthetic spray or gel in the nose. This is not necessary, but may make the procedure more comfortable. Some patients experience an unpleasant taste in their mouth or a temporary unpleasant numbness in their throat after the procedure. Some feel a temporary difficulty swallowing, but this resolves in a few minutes. Most patients experience very little or no discomfort when the tube is inserted. If your nasal passage has an irregularity that makes the procedure difficult, your provider may refer you to have the procedure done under x-ray guidance. And most patients can resume their normal activities within 15-20 minutes.