**Intercostal Block**

**What is an Intercostal Block and why is it helpful?**

Intercostal nerve blocks are injections of local anesthetic and sometimes steroid used to interrupt the signals sent along the intercostal nerves. These injections work to reduce pain and decrease inflammation of the nerves to promote healing and function.

Intercostal nerve blocks are one of the most useful procedures for the relief of severe acute and chronic pain in the chest wall as a result of trauma, surgery, or disease.

**What happens during the procedure?**

As determined by your physician, this block can be done with the patient lying on their abdomen with arms hanging loosely off the side of the cart, lying on their side, or in the sitting position. Occasionally X-ray is used to localize the injection site. The rib to be blocked is first identified and palpated (examined) by the physician. The skin in the area to be injected is cleansed using an antiseptic solution. The physician then injects a local anesthetic or combination local anesthetic/steroid around the area of the nerve(s). This medicine stings for several seconds. After the numbing medicine is effective there may be temporary numbness of the ribcage.

**What happens after the procedure?**

The patient is observed for at least 20 minutes in the Pain Service area for response to the injection. Blood Pressure and pulse will be monitored. Breath sounds will be checked if there is any shortness of breath or change in breathing after the injection(s). The patient may be scheduled for a post injection follow-up visit or for more injections at intervals designated by the physician.

**General Pre/Post Instructions**

Patients may eat a light meal before the procedure. If a patient is an insulin dependent diabetic, they should take their insulin and eat. Patients may take their routine medications. (e.g. high blood pressure and oral diabetic medications). If you are on Coumadin (Warfarin), Plavix (Clopidogrel), Lovenox, Pletal (Cilostazol), Effient (Prasugrel), Teclid (Ticlopidine), or Pradaxa (Dabigatran), notify the office so that special instructions may be given. If you are allergic to iodine, contrast, or medical dye, please inform the office. Patients can expect to be at the facility approximately 1 1/2 hours. A driver must accompany the patient and be responsible for getting them home. No driving is allowed the day of the procedure. Patients may return to their normal activities the day after the procedure, including returning to work unless instructed otherwise by the physician.