



Comprehensive Pain Physicians

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Occipital Nerve Blocks

What are the occipital nerves and why are occipital nerve blocks helpful? Occipital nerves are located at the base of the skull in the midline and just behind the ears. They provide sensation to the scalp. Inflammation and irritation of these nerves can cause headaches that start at the base of the skull and travel to the top of the head or to the sides along the temples. Blocking these nerves can decrease the severity and frequency of headaches that are caused by these nerves. If the blocks are successful, radiofrequency ablation or cryoablation can provide more long term relief.

General Pre-injection Instructions: This procedure is usually done as an office procedure, and does not require any special preparation.

What happens during the procedure? The patient is placed in a seated position with their head resting on a pillow on the exam table. The location of the nerves is done by palpation. Once the points of maximal tenderness are identified, the areas are cleaned off with alcohol or antibacterial soap. A small needle is used to inject a small amount of numbing medicine (local anesthetic) and possibly some anti-inflammatory (steroid) medicine.

What happens after the procedure? After the procedure, the patient is observed for 15-20 minutes. They are examined for improved movement in the neck and asked to report the percentage of pain relief.

There may be some temporary numbness of the scalp after this procedure. There is no limitation of activities after this procedure.