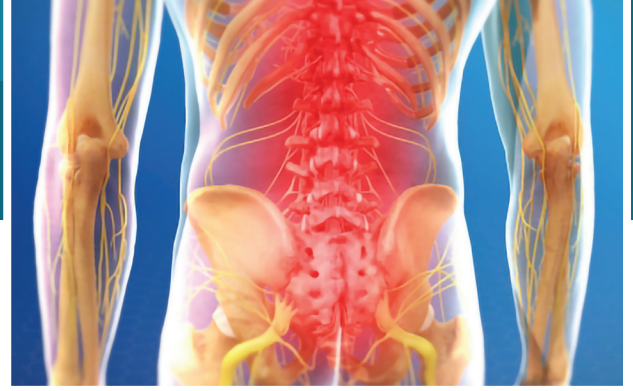


# CLUNEAL NERVE BLOCK



## ■ WHAT IS A CLUNEAL NERVE BLOCK?

If you're one of the millions of people in the U.S. who suffer from lower back pain, a cluneal nerve block could help. Cluneal nerve blocks are a minimally-invasive procedure. They can treat back and upper buttock pain that's caused by cluneal nerve entrapment, damage, or inflammation.

Cluneal nerve entrapment is an often under-diagnosed cause of lower back pain. If your doctor thinks that cluneal nerve entrapment could be the source of your back pain, they'll assess:

- Tenderness along certain "trigger point" areas in the back and buttocks
- Your pain levels when sitting for extended periods of time
- The history of your pain in the lower back and upper buttocks



## ■ CONDITIONS RELATED TO CLUNEAL NERVE BLOCKS

Lower back pain that extends into the upper buttock region may be the result of cluneal nerve entrapment. This condition is called medial superior cluneal nerve entrapment (MSCNE), and the symptoms it causes are quite similar to those that are reported by people who have facet syndrome.

Cluneal nerve entrapment is different, however, because it is characterized by nerves that become pinched in the tunnel-like iliac crest. In order to determine if this condition is present, a clinical examination may be performed to determine if a patient suffers from cluneal nerve entrapment symptoms:

- The patient struggles to sit for prolonged periods
- Pain in the buttocks is more intense on one side
- There is a painful trigger point on the buttocks

Cluneal nerve blocks offer therapeutic advantages for patients suffering from nerve entrapment. After undergoing a cluneal nerve block procedure, many patients report almost immediate pain relief.

Furthermore, an effective cluneal nerve block provides relief, but it can also prevent a patient from enduring unnecessary back surgery. While back surgery is necessary for some patients, it still carries the risks of invasive surgery. Therefore, cluneal nerve blocks provide a treatment option beyond conservative care, but before surgery is needed.

In addition to the therapeutic benefits, cluneal nerve blocks are also highly-valuable diagnostic tools. This is because if the nerve block effectively alleviates the pain in the buttocks and lower back, it can show a doctor that the correct diagnosis was made. Since lower back pain can be caused by so many causes and conditions, having a positive diagnosis can go a long way towards actually achieving the correct treatment.

## ■ HOW IS A CLUNEAL NERVE BLOCK PERFORMED?

Preparation for the cluneal nerve block procedure involves having a patient lie facedown on a table that is equipped with X-ray machinery. The skin is then sterilized and, if an intravenous anesthetic is necessary (an IV), it is set up along with a monitor that records vital signs. Your doctor will apply topical anesthesia to the lumbar region of your spine before the procedure begins if you have chosen not to use intravenous anesthesia.

The clinician uses an X-ray to guide the injection needle into the lower back. The X-ray is called a fluoroscope, and it provides an image of what is occurring in real-time. A fluoroscope-led procedure can minimize the risk of complications.

Once the needle has been correctly positioned, a dye is administered so that the region it circulates to can be observed. This step ensures that the steroid and anesthetic that are to be injected will be delivered as close as possible to the affected cluneal nerves. The cluneal nerve roots are the target of the block procedure. The steroid targets the inflamed nerves and the anesthetic relieves the persistent pain.

The procedure is minimally-invasive and performed very quickly. In many cases, the whole procedure only takes 15 minutes or less.