

## River Cities Interventional Pain Specialists

Since 2004 Dr. Randall P. Brewer has been in clinical private practice in Shreveport, Louisiana and maintains academic appointments at Duke University and Louisiana State University, where he routinely lectures in the areas of Pain Medicine and clinical Neuroscience in the Department of Neurology and the Medical school. He is board certified by the American Society of Anesthesiologists, the American Board of Pain Medicine, and the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology.

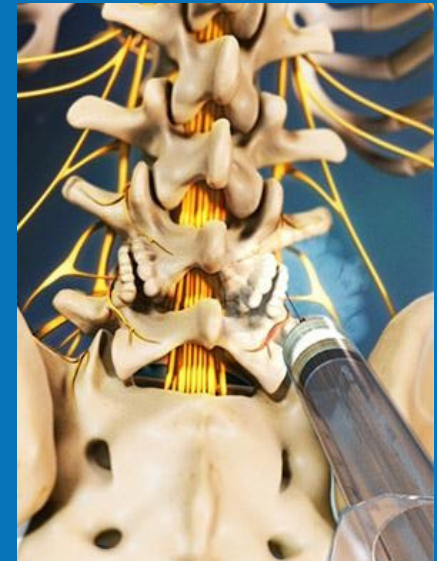
Dr. Brewer and his multi-disciplinary team of highly skilled nurses and physician extenders provide comprehensive pain management treatment solutions to treat chronic pain disorders. The team works collaboratively with patients and area providers to develop individualized treatment plans and attainable goals. . These strategies help patients to effectively address a wide range of chronic pain disorders.

### Contact Us

8731 Park Plaza Drive  
Shreveport, LA 71105  
o: (318) 797-5848  
f: (318) 797-5844  
contact@rivercities.net  
www.rivercities.net



## TOP TEN QUESTIONS ABOUT...



## NERVE BLOCKS

# TOP TEN QUESTIONS ABOUT...

## NERVE BLOCKS

### 1. What is a “nerve block?”

Nerves are the electrical parts of the body that transfer information about pain and other feelings to the brain. “Blocking” a nerve means that the information transfer will be temporarily interrupted.

### 2. What is a “selective nerve root block?”

A “selective nerve root block” is a type of nerve block that specifically blocks the transfer of pain signals from a very precise region. For example, a nerve blocked that goes to the foot would affect feeling in the foot, but not necessarily the knee or hip.

### 3. How are nerve blocks helpful to doctors?

Most nerve blocks are meant to serve a specific purpose. Nerve blocks in the low back, for example, allow doctors to understand if pain in the low back that goes down the leg is related to that nerve.

### 4. I have a “herniated disc”, how will a nerve block help?

Herniated discs are common and can lead to pressure on important nerves in the spine (back and neck). Often this is accompanied by inflammation. When the pain is caused by a herniated disc, placing a steroid medication around the nerve can reduce or relieve some of the inflammation.

### 5. How is the doctor going to block the nerve?

Nerve blocks involve the precise placement of a solution of “local anesthetic” around the nerve. Local anesthetics, like “novacaine” work by temporarily blocking the electrical signals in the nerve. When these signals are blocked, the transmission of pain signals to the brain are temporarily interrupted.

### 6. How long will the nerve block work?

The amount of time that a nerve block works depends upon the type of local anesthetic that your doctor uses. Some local anesthetics (for example, lidocaine) only last one to two hours, while other local anesthetics (for example, bupivacaine) will last longer (3-4 hours).

### 7. Will I be weak or numb from the nerve block?

Depending upon the strength of the local anesthetic that your doctor uses, the muscles that are affected by the blocked nerve may become weak for a period of time, or you may experience numbness. Your doctor will discuss with you specific guidelines that you should follow for your safety after the nerve block. Usually muscle weakness, if it occurs, lasts only a very brief period of time.

### 8. Can the nerve block help to treat my pain?

Many people experience improvements in their pain for a significant period of time (2 or more weeks) after any numbness or weakness has gone away. If your doctor elects to include a steroid solution with your nerve block, the injection may provide pain relief from the steroid injection in addition to the local anesthetic. The benefit of the nerve block may last days to months depending upon your particular condition.

### 9. If the nerve block helps, how do I know if it was the local anesthetic or the steroid?

Being informed of the types of medications in your nerve block is very important for you to understand how your pain may respond. Generally, the early relief of pain following nerve block (within one hour after the procedure) is a result of the “local anesthetic effect.” The relief from the steroid solution generally begins to appear sometime after the injection (2-5 days or more). Occasionally, possibly due to “breaking the pain cycle”, the local anesthetic and steroid effects are indistinguishable.

### 10. If the nerve block helps, can the doctor just “kill the nerve?”

Neurolytic techniques, (i.e. “killing the nerve”) are used in very specific circumstances for very specific conditions. For pain not due to cancer, neurolytic techniques are uncommonly used for major nerves (such as the nerves that move the arm or leg). Large nerves are very important for normal function, and doctors rarely perform neurolytic techniques on these nerves.

