

PATIENT EDUCATION

Medial branch/ facet joint injection

What is a facet joint?

Facet joints are very much like finger joints that are located on each side of the spine at each disc level. These joints limit spinal movement and can cause pain after an injury or as they degenerate.

How does a facet joint block work?

When the spine is injured, diseased, or degenerated, the facet joints may be a source of pain. The resulting symptom is typically back pain, which mainly stays in the low back but may radiate into the legs, buttocks, hips, or to just above the knee. Pain and stiffness of the lower back is also noted, and leaning forward slightly may make the pain better. Pain and stiffness is common in the back and neck as well, and may produce headaches.

The facet joint block procedure can be both diagnostic and therapeutic. This treatment can be used to identify a pain source, and to relieve the pain that is produced by inflammation of the facet joint. If the relief is of short duration, a facet joint rhizotomy procedure may be considered.

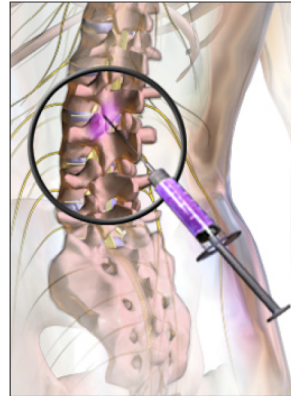
How is it performed?

Facet joint blocks (injections) are performed in the procedure room using fluoroscopy (x-ray). The patient is positioned on the fluoroscopy table, and the facet joints to be treated are identified. The joints are then numbed with a fast acting medication.

What are the potential risks?

As with any invasive procedure, there is the risk of infection and bleeding at the injection site. Very rarely nerve damage may occur.

what you need to know



What are the expected benefits?

Pain relief should be noted immediately after the procedure. It may only last for the duration of the local anesthetic (4-6 hours). If a steroid is used, this may decrease pain for a prolonged period of

time. It is common to have localized pain at the needle puncture site. Generally, ice applied to this area is helpful.

These procedures are most effective when combined with other methods to control pain, including physical therapy, medication management, weight loss, smoking cessation, and other interventions.

How do I prepare?

You should continue with all therapies and medications prescribed by your doctor. If you are on a blood thinner, you may need to discontinue it prior to the procedure. We will discuss this with you before your injection.

Eat a light breakfast before the procedure.

Please register at the front lobby reception desk when you arrive. A member of the hospital staff will escort you from there. Plan to spend at least one hour at the hospital, and make sure to have someone available to drive you home.

Same Day Surgery will call you with a date and time for your procedure. Typically, injections are scheduled on Monday and Fridays.