

Medial Branch Block/Facet Injection

WHAT IS IT?

Because there are many causes of spinal pain, doctors rely on diagnostic tests to try to pinpoint the source of your pain. After a thorough examination, your doctor may determine your pain is caused by the facet joints in your spine. Facet joints are located between each of the vertebrae in the spine; and their function is to help the spine move correctly. Over time, you may develop facet arthritis, which causes inflammation and consequently, spinal pain.

The diagnostic procedures used to confirm inflammation of your facet joints are medial branch blocks and facet injections. The medications used in these injections are anesthetics and steroids, which reduce pain and inflammation. While similar in most ways, the key difference between a medial branch block and a facet joint injection is the location of the actual injection. When administering a medial branch block, your doctor injects medication near the nerve that delivers pain signals from the facet joints to the brain, which is called the medial branch nerve. During a facet injection, your doctor injects medication directly into a facet joint.

HOW WILL IT HELP ME?

The medial branch block and facet injection are both used to relieve spinal pain and are effective diagnostic tools for your doctor to determine the source of your pain. If the source of your pain is caused by inflammation in the facet joints, you will feel relief from the procedure.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT?

Upon arrival, you will meet with one of the healthcare professionals to discuss your medical history and to ask any questions you may have about the procedure.

You may elect to have IV sedation to help you relax. Once the area is sterilized, your doctor numbs the area and then injects a needle containing medications into the intended area. Following the procedure, you will rest in the recovery area. If sedated, you will need a responsible adult to accompany you home.

Recovery time is relatively short due to the nature of the procedure. You may feel slight discomfort at the injection site, but you would feel relief within 24 hours. Be sure to follow discharge instructions, and contact your doctor if discomfort continues or new symptoms arise.

HOW SOON WILL I FEEL RELIEF?

Following the procedure, it is important to document your pain levels for five hours. This feedback helps your doctor diagnose the source of your pain. You may feel immediate and lasting relief. However, if you feel moderate or temporary relief, your doctor may recommend another procedure to help relieve your pain. If you don't receive any relief, your doctor may rule out facet joints as the source of your pain and continue diagnostic testing.

