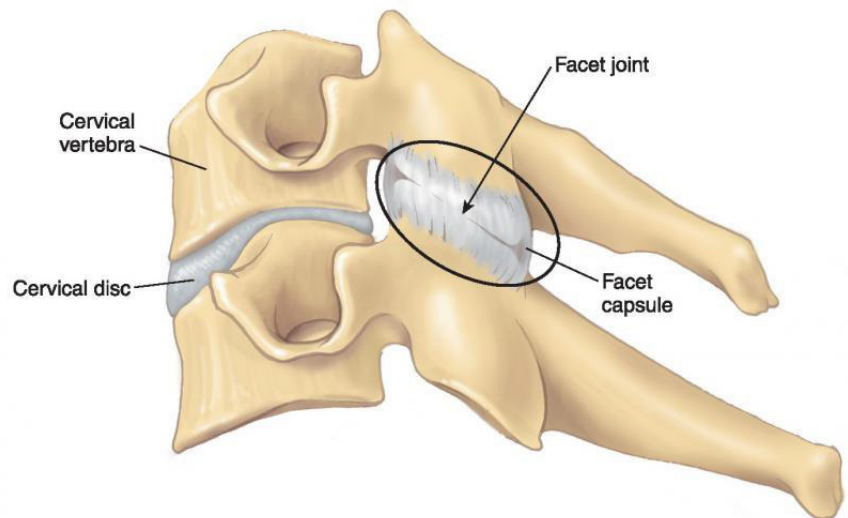


## FACET JOINT INJECTIONS AND MEDIAL BRANCH BLOCKS (MBB'S)

### What is a facet joint?

The facet joint links the vertebrae together and gives them the flexibility to move against each other. There are two facet joints between each pair of vertebrae, one on each side. They extend and overlap each other to form a joint between the neighboring vertebrae facet joint. The facet joint enables bending and twisting movements of the spine.



### What is a medial branch block?

The medial branch is the branch of the spinal nerve that carries sensation and pain signals from the facet to the spinal cord.

### How do the facet joints cause pain?

The facet joints are like any other joint in the body, they are susceptible to acute injury (sprain and/or strain) as well as degenerative arthritis. In the neck, the facet joints may cause neck pain, shoulder pain and headaches. The pain is especially bad when trying to look up or turn your head.

### What are the indications for a facet joint block or medial branch block?

These injections are done as a diagnostic test when it is thought that a facet joint or joints are part of the process causing the pain. A small amount of a local anesthetic is injected into the joint or over the medial branch nerve to see if this temporarily relieves your back pain and neck pain.

### How long will the pain relief last?

The local anesthetic will only last a few hours. A small amount of steroid may be injected along with the local anesthetic and may provide pain relief from days to months. It is not uncommon for the relief you receive from any Medial Branch Block to last for a few hours to a few days. It is important to keep a diary of how much relief you experienced and for how long. This will assist your doctor in determining the next steps in your treatment.

### How do I prepare for the procedure?

These injections are a minor surgical procedure that is typically performed in the physician's office or an ambulatory surgery center. You should not eat or drink anything for at least 8 hours before your procedure. You should take all of your medications except blood thinners the day of the procedure unless instructed otherwise by the surgery center staff.

### What should I expect during the procedure?

You will be lying on an x-ray table during the procedure. Live x-rays (called fluoroscopy) will then be taken to ensure you are properly positioned. Your neck or back will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution and a sterile drape will be placed over the area to keep it clean during the procedure. A local anesthetic will then be injected into your skin to make it numb.

A needle will be inserted through the numbed skin and slowly advanced into the facet joint (or close to the medial branch nerve) using fluoroscopy to guide the needle. When the needle enters the facet joint (or comes close to the medial branch nerve), it is common to feel a slight increase in your pain level. The local anesthetic is then injected. Once the injection is completed, the needle is withdrawn and a dressing is placed over the injection site.



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### How soon after the procedure can I go home?

Your blood pressure, pulse and breathing will be monitored for 15 to 20 minutes after your procedure. Once your vital signs are stable, you will be able to go home.

### Can I drive myself or do I need a ride?

Most patients prefer to have a family member or friend drive them for their procedure. If you are having sedation, you must have a driver take you home.

### Can I have sedation for the procedure?

Yes, sedation is used for procedures performed at the surgery center.

### Can the procedure make my pain worse?

Some patients will experience mild pain with the procedure that will ease up in a very short amount of time. On rare occasions, patients have experienced a prolonged increase in pain after the procedure.

### What if the procedure does not improve my pain?

Facet joint injections and medial branch blocks are performed to diagnose pain being caused by the facet joints in your neck or back and will not relieve pain caused intervertebral discs, spinal nerves, or muscles, which can continue to cause pain after the procedure. If your pain is not relieved after the procedure, the facet joints have been ruled out as the source of your pain.

### What if the injection is successful?

If the injections successfully treated your pain, then you will most likely be scheduled for a radiofrequency ablation (RFA) of the medial nerves. Most patients are tentatively scheduled for both their Medial Branch Blocks (MBB's) and their radiofrequency ablations (RFA's) based on the recommendations by your doctor.

### Are there any restrictions following the procedure?

We ask that you not immerse yourself in water for 24 hours after the injections. This means you can shower, but do not take a bath or go swimming the rest of the day. There are no other specific restrictions on activity, however, we recommend that you "take it easy" the rest of the day and slowly resume normal activities.

### What are the risks of the procedure?

Overall, facet joint injections (and MBB's) are a very safe procedure. Serious side effects or complications are rare, however, like all injection procedures, possible adverse side effects are possible. The most common complications include bleeding and bruising at the needle puncture site, post-procedure headaches, and lightheadedness or dizziness immediately following a cervical injection of the spine.

Other rare complications include transient numbness or weakness, paralysis (partial or complete), contrast or allergic reactions, sexual dysfunction, and death. If you experience any concerning symptoms after your injection, you should call your doctor immediately or go to an emergency room for evaluation.

Patient: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

Medical Staff: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_