

MEDIAL BRANCH BLOCK

is an outpatient procedure for treatment of chronic lower back pain, neck pain and headaches. This information has been provided by your provider so you can better understand this procedure. Your provider will make the best recommendation for your specific needs.

This pamphlet is for general education only. Specific questions or concerns should always be directed to your provider. Your provider can explain possible risks or side effects



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for Chronic Lower Back Pain,
Neck Pain & Headaches



PATIENT EDUCATION SERIES
MINIMALLY INVASIVE SPINE PROCEDURES

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What are facet joints?

Facet joints, located on both sides of the spine, are small but guide the spine in movement. These are named for the vertebrae they connect and the side of the spine where they are found.

What is facet joint pain?

Facet joint pain is a result of injury, either to the cartilage inside the joint or the connecting ligaments surrounding the joint. Pain from an injured facet joint may range from muscle tension to more severe pain. Depending on which facet joint is affected, the pain may occur in an area from your head, neck, lower and upper back. Areas of pain usually associated with specific joints include: your buttocks if lumbar; upper back to lower back if thoracic; and lower neck to back of head if cervical.

Common tests such as x-rays or MRIs may not always show if a facet joint is the reason for your pain.

What is a medial branch block?

During this procedure a local anesthetic is injected near the medial branch nerve, which stops the transmission of pain signals from the facet joint. If your pain is reduced and you are able to move your neck and back normally, then the doctor will know which facet joint(s) has been causing your pain.

How is a medial branch block performed?

A local anesthetic may be used to numb your skin. The doctor will then insert a thin needle near the medial branch nerve.

Fluoroscopy, a type of x-ray, will be used to ensure the safe and proper position of the needle. Once your physician is sure the needle is correctly placed, the medicine will be injected.

What happens after an injection?

You will be monitored for up to 30 minutes after the injection. Before you leave, you will be given discharge instructions. Keeping track of your pain helps the doctor know what the next steps will be.

You may want to check for pain by moving in ways that hurt before the injection, but do not overdo it. You may feel immediate pain relief and numbness in your head, neck, lower and upper back for a brief period of time after the injection. This means the medication has reached the right spot.

You should be able to return to work the day after the injection, but always check with your doctor.

Is MBB right for you?

How long you can expect pain relief following a medial branch block depends on how many areas are injured and the amount of inflammation.

You should expect one of the following outcomes:

- The pain is not relieved. This may be a sign the pain you are experiencing is not a result of facet joint problems.
- The pain goes away for a couple of hours but then comes back. This means the pain is likely from facet joint problems and your doctor may recommend additional treatment.
- The pain goes away for several days after the block. If your injection included a steroid that reduced inflammation, you may experience relief for days. This means you may benefit from further treatment to the facet joint area and medial nerves.

If you experience either of the latter two outcomes, you may be a candidate for Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA) to the medial branch nerve. This procedure provides a long-term disruption of pain signals and may help reduce pain for up to 18 months.

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