

Medial Branch Nerve Blocks

What are facet joints?

Facet joints (also known as the Zygapophysial joints or Z-joints) are paired structures at the back of each vertebra (spinal column bones). The facet joints, like other joints in the body, form a working motion unit that allows movement between two vertebrae.

Similar to the shoulder or knee joints, facet joints are surrounded by a capsule that bathes the moving parts in lubricating fluid.

What is a medial branch block injection?

A medial branch block is an injection of anesthetic medication onto the nerves that transmit pain information. The nerves that transmit pain are called medial branch nerves. For this reason, the procedure is called a medial branch block. The goal of the shot is to relieve pain in your lower back. These blocks are typically temporary in nature, only lasting 6-12 hours, but they determine whether or not you will be a candidate for a longer lasting procedure called a radiofrequency ablation. Radiofrequency ablation of the medial branch nerves may last 6-12 months. For most insurance companies, in order to qualify for a radiofrequency ablation procedure, you will need to have had 2 successful medial branch nerve blocks performed 2 weeks apart. After the medial branch block procedures, you will meet with your physician again to discuss the success of the blocks and the radiofrequency ablation procedure.

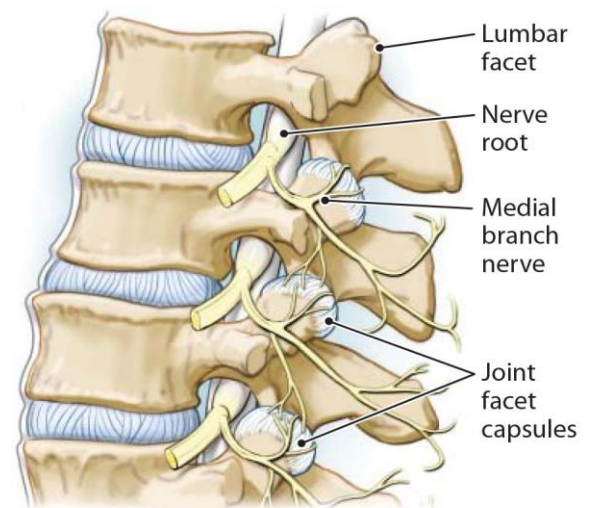
Before the procedure

You will meet with a doctor who will review the risks and benefits of the procedure and answer any questions you may have. The potential side effects include, but are not limited to:

- Infection
- Bleeding
- Temporary increase in pain

Before the procedure:

- Please honestly review all your medications with us prior to your facet injection or nerve



block procedure. Please inform our staff about any medication changes.

- Please let us know if you have had fevers, antibiotic treatment, any illnesses, or hospitalization within the last 4 weeks. You must be healthy on the day of the procedure.

The day of the procedure

- You will be fully awake during the procedure. Sedation is occasionally used. Discuss with your physician when scheduling the procedure.
- Continue to take all medications, ESPECIALLY BLOOD PRESSURE MEDICATIONS. Bring all your medications with you so you can take them as needed after the procedure. Please note: your blood sugar and blood pressure will need to be within a safe range on the day of the procedure.

During the procedure

- The procedure will take approximately 10 to 30 minutes.
- You will be lying face down during the procedure.

After the procedure

- Pain relief may begin immediately after the medication has been injected. The block is only likely to last 6-12 hours. During that time keep a log of your pain relief. Once this time has expired, you are likely to have a recurrence of your previous pain. Apply ice to the injection area to decrease discomfort.
- A bandage may be placed over the injection site.
- A responsible adult must drive you home. You must not drive yourself.

Discharge instructions

- Do not drive or operate machinery for at least 24 hours after the procedure.
- You may eat your normal diet.
- Do not participate in strenuous activity that day.
- You may remove any bandages the morning following the procedure.
- You may take a shower. Do not take a bath or sit in a hot tub for 48 hours.