

CERVICAL FACET JOINT INJECTION / MEDIAL BRANCH BLOCK

Facet Region

What is a cervical facet or medial branch?

Cervical facet joints are small joints about the size of the thumb nails located in pairs on the back of the neck. They provide stability and guide motion. If the joints become inflamed, they may cause pain in the head, neck, shoulders, down between the shoulder blades or in the arm. Medial branch nerves are the very small nerve branches that communicate pain caused by the facet joints in the spine. These nerves do not control any muscles or sensation in the arms or legs.

What are the cervical facet joint injection / Medial branch blocks?

Used as a diagnostic tool, the injections confirm if the facet joint is the source of your pain. When an anti-inflammatory steroid medication and local anesthetic is injected directly into the joint, this is called a facet joint injection. A medial branch block is similar but the medication is placed outside the joint space near the nerve that supplies the joint. The steroid shrinks swelling around the nerve roots and the local anesthetic numbs the inflamed areas. To ensure proper placement of the medication, the procedure will be performed under x-ray, also known as fluoroscopy.

What is the purpose of the cervical facet injection / Medial branch block?

The facet injection / medial branch block is used for both diagnostic purposes and to give a therapeutic response. Your response to the injection determines the next treatment option. One of three things may happen: 1) You receive no benefit – the pain does not go away; this means the pain is probably not coming from the facet joint. 2) You receive some benefit – the pain goes away for a few hours but returns without any change in intensity; this means the pain is probably coming from the facet joint but the steroid was not beneficial. 3) You receive definite benefit – the pain goes away, may return, but gets better gradually over the next few days.

What are the risks of the procedure?

Risks, although remote include: bleeding, infection, nerve injury, and allergic reaction to the medication(s).

Diabetics may have short-term elevation of blood sugars. People prone to fluid retention may have increased fluid retention for 1 – 2 weeks.

How are the cervical facet injection / medial branch block performed?

Upon registering at the Southwest Ohio Pain Center, we will begin your procedure. An IV will be started and you may be given medication for relaxation if you so desire. Your neck region will be cleansed with an anti-septic solution and numbed with anesthetic. This is felt as a stinging / burning sensation. The doctor will insert the needle into the appropriate location. The procedure takes about 15-30 minutes. A bandage will be applied at the needle insertion site, which may be removed the next morning. You will be discharged when the physician authorizes.

What to expect from the injections:

During the injection, your neck pain will be increased temporarily. You may get 4-6 hours of neck pain relief immediately after the injection, however your pain will return and you may have

more pain than usual for 5-6 days afterwards.

How much relief will I get & how long will it last?

Relief varies from one person to the next. The only way to know is to have the injection performed. The steroid may take several days to work and therefore you will know by the end of 1 (one) week if the injection helped.

What should I do after the cervical facet injection / Medial branch block?

You may apply ice to the affected area for 20 minutes every 2 hours. After the first day, you can perform activities as before & return to work.

Will I have any restrictions on the day of the procedure?

You may NOT drive for the remainder of the day after your procedure. No heat is to be used on the injection area for the remainder of the day. No tub bath or soaking in water (pools / Jacuzzi, etc) for the remainder of the day.

For what reasons should I call the Southwest Ohio Pain Center after the injection?

If you experience severe neck pain, new numbness or weakness of your arms, or have signs of infection (temperature greater than 99.9°, drainage, redness / heat at insertion site) – call IMMEDIATELY.

ON THE DAY OF YOUR PROCEDURE, PLEASE DO THE FOLLOWING:

- ◆ Take all blood pressure pills & heart medications prior to the procedure with a sip of water.

- ◆ Have a responsible person to take you home.

- ◆ Arrive at the requested procedure time. Please do not be late or your procedure may be cancelled.

ON THE DAY OF YOUR PROCEDURE, PLEASE DO NOT DO THE FOLLOWING:

- ◆ Take ANY of the following 5 days before your procedure: Celebrex

- ◆ Take ANY of the following 7 days before your procedure: Plavix.

- ◆ Coumadin must be stopped prior to the injection. You must have a normal INR prior to your procedure.
 Do not stop the drug by yourself!

- ◆ Nothing to eat or drink 6 hours prior to procedure.

NOTE: YOUR PROCEDURE WILL BE CANCELLED IF:

- **You have an active infection, flu, cold, fever, or very high blood pressure.**
- **You do not have a responsible driver to take you home, arrive late for your procedure,
or unable to follow the medication / fluid restrictions.**

Call the office at (501) 219-1114 for procedure related questions.