

Facet Joint Injections and Medial Branch Blocks

Chronic Pain Management Services

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

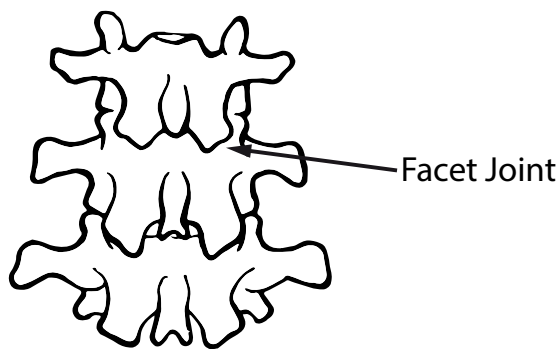
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water and dry thoroughly. Use hand gel, if provided, in care facilities.
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and vomiting stay at home and do not visit relatives that are vulnerable in hospital or in residential care. You will spread the illness.
- Keep the environment clean and safe. Let's work together to keep it that way. Prevention is better than cure.

Introduction

This leaflet has been written to help you understand more about Facet Joint Injections and Medial Branch Blocks.

What are Facet Joint Injections and Medial Branch Blocks?

The facet joints are small pairs of joints situated at the rear of the spine that allow movement and preserve stability of the whole spine. As we get older, arthritis or degeneration of these joints may lead to inflammation or pain. Medial branch nerves are small nerves that feed out from the facet joints and can carry pain signals from these joints to other areas.



A combination of a local anaesthetic agent and steroid solution is injected into one or more facet joints to try to block pain messages. The short acting anaesthetic should numb the nerves for a few hours (like at the dentist).

The steroid may take weeks to take full effect, so you may not notice any significant pain reduction at first.

Facet joint injections may be given at any level of your spine. It will depend upon where you experience pain and from the results of X-rays or scans. Sometimes, instead of injecting into the joint space, the nerve that supplies the joint is injected. This is called a medial branch block. Both of these injections can result in pain relief.

Sometimes these injections are used as a means of confirming whether the facet joints are the cause of the pain, and, in particular, which joint causes most problems. If this diagnosis is

confirmed, some people may go on to facet nerve denervation as the next step.

On what type of pain do facet joint injections work?

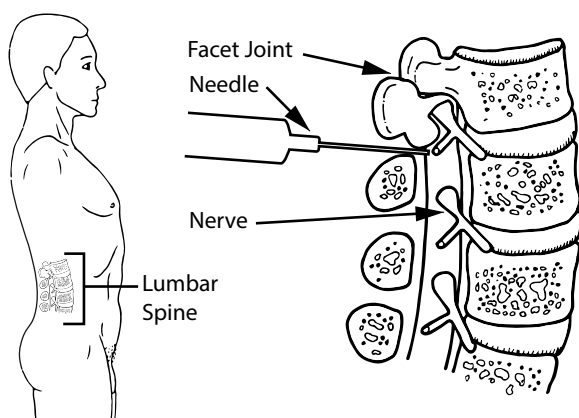
These injections work on pain that is both localised to the spine or that radiates down the arms or legs from the neck or lower back.

The injection is thought to work by reducing any inflammation around the nerves and allowing tense muscles to relax.

What are the intended benefits of this procedure?

The benefit of this type of treatment is to try and provide you with pain relief. The individual benefit varies. Some people may have months of relief, whilst others feel no benefit at all. Some even report increased pain initially.

How is the injection given?



This injection is carried out at the Appleby Suite, in the day case theatre whilst you are awake. You will need to sign a consent form to allow treatment to be given. You should only do this when you are sure you understand what the procedure will entail and that any benefits,

risks or side effects have been explained to you.

Your doctor will ask you to sit in the best position for the procedure to be carried out. Your skin will be cleaned with antiseptic solution before a small needle is inserted into your back and a local anaesthetic is given.

This may sting a little, but it should not last long.

Using X-ray guidance, the doctor will insert a fine needle into the centre of each facet joint to be injected. He then administers the anaesthetic/steroid mixture over a couple of minutes. It helps if you can keep very still during this time.

After the injection, a small dressing is applied and you will be taken to the recovery room. The medications given can cause your blood pressure and pulse to become lower than normal. You will need monitoring for this.

What happens after the Injection?

- You should be allowed home the same day. You will need someone to take you home as you should not drive on the same day as your injections. Try to rest, but you do not have to stay in bed
- The dressing may be removed from your back the next day. You may then take a bath or shower
- You may eat/drink normally when you get home and take your medication as usual
- Gradually increase the activities you do over the next few weeks. If you attempt to do more than usual you will overwork your muscles resulting in more muscle tension and pain

Are there any risks or complications?

Any medical procedure carries risks, but in the case of facet joint injections these risks are small. If your doctor thought the risks outweighed the benefits to you, you would not have been offered the injection.

- The risk of infection is minimised by performing the procedure under sterile conditions, but it can be a very serious complication if it occurs. If an abscess forms, it could result in compression of the spinal cord, leading to paralysis
- Bleeding can also lead to compression of the spinal cord or paralysis. People taking drugs to thin the blood (Warfarin,

Aspirin, Clopidogrel) should inform their consultant before having this treatment. You should be given separate instructions about what to do before attending theatre

- Anaphylaxis - severe allergic reaction to the drugs used
- Localised bruising or tenderness around the injection site is quite common for a few days afterwards. Some people find that the injection provides very little relief at all, or that their pain becomes worse. In these cases it is unlikely that further injections will be offered

You should not have these injections if you have an infection elsewhere in your body as it can spread through the blood.

Please let your doctor know about any allergies you have.

Remember, facet joint injections are not a cure for your pain condition. But it may help to reduce some of your symptoms.

Are there any alternatives to this procedure?

There are no alternatives to injections. We can try to manage your symptoms with medications and pain management strategies.

Where can I get further information?

You may find more information at the British Pain Society or other patient health websites (accredited by the National Health Service).

The information in this leaflet is not intended to replace your doctor's advice. If you require more information or have any questions please contact the Chronic Pain Team on 01902 307999 Ext 5122.

English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。