



## WHAT TO EXPECT: FACET JOINT INJECTION

**PURPOSE:** In cases where the facet joint itself is the pain generator, a facet block injection can be performed to alleviate the pain. Similar to SNRB's, facet block injections are a diagnostic tool used to isolate and confirm the specific source of back, thoracic or neck pain for the patient. Additionally, facet blocks have a therapeutic effect as they numb the source of pain and soothe the inflammation for the patient.

**PROCEDURE:** This injection is performed in a procedure suite.

- **Local Anesthetic Injected:**

The procedure is typically performed with the patient lying down on their stomach. (Intravenous sedation is usually not administered. Please see separate sedation sheet for more information). The skin and tissue overlying the region is numbed with a local anesthetic delivered through a small needle.

- **Needle Positioned:**

After the skin and tissues are numb, using x-ray guidance (fluoroscopy), your doctor guides a needle close into the targeted facet joint.

- **Contrast Dye Injected:**

Contrast dye is injected into the space to make sure the needle is properly positioned in the facet joint.

- **Steroid Injected:**

A combination of an anesthetic and cortisone steroid solution is injected into the facet joint. The steroid is a potent anti-inflammatory medication that is absorbed by the inflamed nerves to decrease swelling and relieve pressure.

- **End Of Procedure:**

The needle is removed and a small bandage is applied. The patient may stay in our office until they feel comfortable to leave. The procedure takes approximately 20 minutes. Most people can drive following the procedure, with the exception of those who were sedated.

The steroid may take up to a week to take effect. Occasionally, the steroid can cause the pain to increase for 1-2 days before it improves your symptoms.

If the facet block procedure is effective in alleviating the patient's low back pain, it is often considered reasonable for the procedure to be done up to three times per year. There are very few risks associated with this technique.

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