

Facet Joint Injection

Easing Back or Neck Pain

Back or neck pain may be caused by a problem with your facet joints. If so, a **facet joint injection** may help. With this treatment, medication is injected into certain facet joints. The injection can help your doctor find problem joints. It may also relieve your pain.

Getting Ready

To get ready for your treatment, do the following:

- At least a week before treatment, tell your doctor what medications you take (including aspirin). Ask whether you should stop taking any of them before treatment.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or allergic to any medications.
- Stop eating or drinking 8 hours before you check in for your injection, or as directed.
- If asked, bring x-rays, MRIs, or other tests with you on the day of your treatment.

During the Procedure

To help you relax, medication may be given through the IV line. You will lie on an exam table on your stomach, back, or side. This depends on where you will be injected. During the treatment:

- The skin over the injection site is cleaned. A local anesthetic (pain medication) numbs the skin.
- Fluoroscopy (x-ray imaging) may be used to help the doctor see your spine. If so, a contrast “dye” may be injected into the affected area.
- The injection is given. It may contain medications, including a local anesthetic to numb the region around the joint or steroids (medications that reduce inflammation).

After the Procedure

Most often, you can go home in about an hour. Have an adult friend or relative drive you. The anesthetic wears off in a few hours. When it does, your back or neck may feel more sore than usual. This is normal. Take it easy for the rest of the day. The steroids most often begin to work in about 3-4 days. Your doctor can tell you when it's OK to go back to work.

When to Call Your Doctor

Call your doctor if you have any of the following:

- Severe headaches
- Fever over 101 degrees, chills, redness or drainage at the injection site.
- Weakness in your arms or legs

Risks and Complications

Risks and complications are rare, but can include:

- Infection
- Bleeding
- Prolonged increase in pain
- Nerve damage (very rare)

What is a Facet Joint?

Bones called vertebrae make up your spine. Each vertebra has facets (flat surfaces) that touch where the vertebrae fit together. These form a structure called a facet joint on each side of the vertebrae.

What is a Facet Joint Injection?

One or more facet joints in your back or neck can become inflamed (swollen and irritated). This may cause pain. During a facet joint injection, medication is injected into the inflamed joints. This treatment helps reduce inflammation and relieve pain. Pain relief should last for weeks to months. If the pain returns, you may need a repeat injection.

Enjoying Life Again

With your pain reduced, you can get back to enjoying life again. In some cases, the facet joint injection may not relieve all of your pain. You may need more injections in the same place or in other joints. Or, you may need another type of treatment. Your doctor can discuss this with you.