

Medial Branch Neurotomy

Treating Your Pain

Back or neck pain may be due to problems with certain nerves near your spine. If so, a **medial branch neurotomy** can help relieve your pain. The treatment uses heat, cold, or chemicals to destroy the nerves near a problem joint. This keeps some pain messages from traveling to the brain, and helps relieve your symptoms.

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. Blood thinners must be stopped prior to this procedure.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or allergic to any medications.
- Stop eating or drinking 8 hours before you check in for your treatment, or as directed.
- If asked, bring x-rays, MRIs, or other tests with you on the day of treatment.
- Please wear pants with an elastic waist (such as sweat pants) so any metal in the zipper will not show up in the x-rays.

During the Procedure

An IV may be given if the patient wishes to receive medication to help them relax. The nurse will position you on the exam table on your stomach, back or side depending on where you will be injected. During your treatment:

- The skin over the injection site will be cleaned.
- Fluoroscopy, which is x-ray imaging, may be used to help see the spine and guide the treatment. A contrast “dye” may be injected into the affected region to help get a better image.
- Heat, cold, or chemicals are used to destroy part of the nerve near the inflamed facet joint. Other nerves nearby may also be treated.

After the Procedure

Most often, you can go home in about an hour. You will need a drive to drive you home after the procedure. The treated spot may be swollen and may feel more sore than usual. This is normal and may last for a day or so. It will be a few days before you feel relief from your symptoms. Ice for the first 24 hours at 15-20 minute intervals may help and then you may apply heat to this area for comfort.

When to call your Doctor

Call your doctor if you have a fever over 101 degrees, chills, or redness or drainage at the treatment site.

Risks and complications

Risks and complications are rare, but can include:

- Infection
- Increased pain, numbness, or weakness
- Nerve damage
- Bleeding
- Failure to relieve pain

Medial Branch Nerves

Each vertebra in your spine has facets (flat surfaces). They touch where the vertebrae fit together. This forms a facet joint. Each facet joint has at least two medial branch nerves. They are a part of the nerve pathway to and from each facet joint. A facet joint in your back or neck can become inflamed. Pain messages may then travel along the nerve pathway from the facet joint to your brain.

Blocking Pain Messages

Medial branch nerves in each facet joint send and carry messages about back and neck pain. Destroying a few of these nerves can keep certain pain messages from reaching the brain. This can help bring you relief.

Discussing Your Results

Relief from pain can help you enjoy your life again. Let your doctor know if you still have pain after your treatment. The treated nerves most often re-grow within 6 months to a year. At that time, you may need repeat treatment.