

# Facet Block

Your doctor has referred you for a facet block because he/she feels that a significant part of your discomfort is associated with the joints of the spine and has selected one or more for injection. The injection is intended to relieve pain and not to correct any abnormality or prevent deterioration of the joint. This treatment is intended to be combined with proper exercises, physical therapy and proper precautions in using your back. It may make it easier to carry out the proper exercises and physical therapy which are useful in strengthening muscles which stabilize your back.

During the procedure, the area in and around the facet joint is injected with a mixture of a local anesthetic and a steroid. The local anesthetic will numb the area. The steroid may help lower the swelling, which should reduce your pain.

## How to prepare

Once your procedure is scheduled, we will give you instructions on how to prepare. For your safety, please tell us if you:

- Have any allergies to latex, local anesthetics or X-ray dye.

## Does the procedure hurt?

Your doctor will inject a medicine to numb the skin over the facet joints. You may feel some stinging from this medicine. You may also feel some pressure when your doctor injects the local anesthetic and steroid into the area in and around your facet joints.

## What to expect

The facet block generally involves these steps:

1. You will be taken in to the procedure room where your doctor will ask for your consent to do the procedure.
2. You will lie on a table. Then the area to be injected will be cleaned with a special solution, this will help keep the area free of germs.
3. Your doctor will use a special X-ray to help view the area. He or she will then numb the area with a local anesthetic.
4. Your doctor may inject contrast (a substance that will help highlight the area on X-rays). If you are allergic to contrast, your doctor will discuss your options with you before the procedure.
5. Then your doctor will inject the combined numbing and steroid medication into your joint(s).

The procedure takes about 10 minutes. You will be awake during the procedure and may ask questions at any time. Before you leave, we will give you instructions on how to care for yourself at home.

## Possible side effects

Side effects from a facet block are rare. The most common side effect is pain where you were injected.

### After the procedure

- The local anesthetic will wear off in 4 hours. At that time, your usual level of pain may return until the steroid starts working. This can take up to one week.
- The pain relief from a facet block usually will last for several months, but this may vary from patient to patient. You may have 3-4 facet blocks a year.
- If you have no pain relief from the facet block, your doctor will work with you to find the source of your pain and explore your treatment options.

If you have any questions, please call the Radiology Department at 617-754-5287, option 3.