



The facet joints connect the bones of the spine (vertebrae). They make it possible for you to bend, twist and make other movements with your spine. They also prevent you from overbending, overtwisting and making other excessive movements.

A facet joint block is a procedure where a numbing medicine (anesthetic) is injected into a facet joint. A facet joint block may be done for two reasons:

**Diagnostic:** A test to see whether neck or back pain is caused by a worn-down or infected facet joint. If the pain gets better after a facet joint block, it means the pain is probably coming from the facet joint. If the pain does not get better, it means the pain is probably not coming from the facet joint.

**Therapeutic:** A facet joint block may be done to relieve neck or back pain caused by a facet joint. A facet joint block is only done as a therapy if the pain does not improve with medicine, physical therapy and other forms of pain management.

#### **LET YOUR CAREGIVER KNOW ABOUT:**

- Any allergies you have.
- All medicines you are taking, including vitamins, herbs, eyedrops and over-the-counter medicines and creams.
- Previous problems you or members of your family have had with the use of anesthetics.
- Any blood disorders you have had.
- Other health problems you have.

#### **RISKS AND COMPLICATIONS**

- Bleeding
- Injury to a nerve near the injection site
- Pain at the injection site
- Weakness or numbness in areas controlled by nerves near the injection site
- Infection
- Temporary fluid retention
- Allergic reaction to anesthetics or medicines used during the procedure

#### **BEFORE THE PROCEDURE**

- Follow your caregiver's instructions if you are taking dietary supplements or medicines. You may need to stop taking them or reduce your dosage.
- Do not take any new dietary supplements or medicines without asking your caregiver first.
- Follow your caregiver's instructions about eating and drinking before the procedure. You may need to stop eating and drinking several hours before the procedure.
- Arrange to have transportation home after the procedure.

#### **PROCEDURE**

- The procedure will be done while you are lying on an X-ray table. Most of the time you will be asked to lie on your stomach, but you may be asked to lie in a different position if an injection will be made in your neck.
- Special machines will be used to monitor your oxygen levels, heart rate and blood pressure.
- If an injection will be made in your neck, an intravenous (IV) tube will be inserted into one of your veins. Fluids and medicine will flow directly into your body through the IV tube.

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- The area over the facet joint where the injection will be made will be cleaned with an antiseptic soap. The surrounding skin will be covered with sterile drapes.
- An anesthetic will be applied to your skin to make the injection area numb. You may feel a temporary stinging or burning sensation.
- A video X-ray machine will be used to locate the joint. A contrast dye may be injected into the facet joint area to help with locating the joint.
- When the joint is located, an anesthetic medicine will be injected into the joint through the needle.
- Your caregiver will ask you whether you feel pain relief. If you do feel relief, a steroid may be injected to provide pain relief for a longer period of time. If you do not feel relief or feel only partial relief, additional injections of an anesthetic may be made in other facet joints.
- The needle will be removed, the skin will be cleansed and bandages will be applied.
- The procedure usually takes less than a half hour to perform.

#### **AFTER THE PROCEDURE**

- You will be observed for 15 to 30 minutes before being allowed to go home. Do not drive.
- If you feel pain relief, the pain will return in several hours or days when the anesthetic wears off.
- You may feel pain relief two to 14 days after the procedure. The amount of time this relief lasts varies from person to person.
- It is normal to feel some tenderness over the injected area(s) for two days following the procedure.
- If you have diabetes, you may have a temporary increase in blood sugar.
- You may not submerge your body in water (bathtub, pool, hot tub) for up to 48 hours after the procedure.
- You should limit aggressive physical activity for up to 48 hours after the procedure.

