

Diagnostic Facet Injection

What is it?

This procedure is used to tell your doctor if your pain is coming from the facet joints in your back or neck. A facet is a small joint in the spine. This is not a treatment for your pain. It is a test! On the day of the procedure we do not want you to take any pain medicine.

How is it done?

You will be given medicine to numb your skin. X-ray is used to help locate the nerve branches that innervate (go to) the facet joint. Then a longer lasting numbing medicine is injected on the small branch nerve. You may feel that your “usual pain” is reproduced when the needle touches the nerve.

What results can I expect?

Remember that this is a test to see if the pain you have is coming from the facet joint. If it is, then you can expect to have more than 50% pain relief for the next three to six hours, especially while doing activities that would normally make your pain worse. Ask yourself, “Did my pain go away, and did it come back?” If your “usual pain” is better for three to six hours, a procedure called a radiofrequency ablation (or burning) of this nerve branch is the next step. If your “usual pain” is not better, the doctor will then have to discuss another plan of care.

