

Facet Joint Block Injection

Each vertebra in the spine is connected by two facet joints – one on each side of the spine. For back or neck pain believed to originate in these joints, a facet joint block can be both diagnostic and therapeutic. This injection can confirm whether the facet joints are indeed the source of pain and can help relieve the pain and inflammation.

STEP 1

A small area of skin is numbered with a local anesthetic injection.

STEP 2

Guided by fluoroscopic x-ray, a needle is placed into the facet joint. The correct placement of the needle is confirmed by injecting contrast dye into the joint.

STEP 3

A combination of a numbing anesthetic and an anti-inflammatory steroid medication is delivered to the joint through a thin needle. Depending on the location of pain, one or more injections may be given. If the pain subsides after the injection, this suggests that the facet joint(s) injected were the cause of pain.

END OF PROCEDURE

Back or neck pain may disappear immediately after a successful block. However, once the numbing effect of the anesthetic wears off, pain may return.

It usually takes 5 to 10 days for the steroid medication to reduce inflammation and alleviate pain. Its effects may last several days or several months. Up to three injections may be given per year.

