

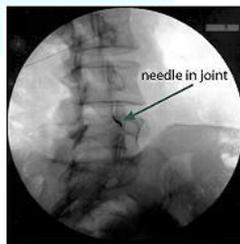
Facet Joint Injection, Medial Branch Block and Radiofrequency Denervation (Ablation) PATIENT EDUCATION SHEET

Facet Joint Injections/Medial Branch Blocks

Facet joint injections are used to localize and treat low back pain caused by problems of the facet joints. These joints are located on each side of the vertebrae. They join the vertebrae together and allow the spine to move with flexibility. Sometimes a facet joint injection allows the doctor to confirm that the joint is in fact causing the pain. Steroid medication is used to decrease inflammation that occurs in the joint from arthritis and joint degeneration.

There are two types of facet joint injections.

Intra-articular are injected directly into the joint to block the pain and reduce inflammation. For this type of injection it is important to make sure that the injection goes directly into the facet joint. Fluoroscopy can be used to confirm that the needle is in the right position before any medication is injected. A fluoroscope uses X-rays to show a TV image. Your doctor can watch on the screen as the needle is placed into the joint and magnify the image to increase accuracy.



Medial branch nerve blocks help determine whether the joint is indeed a source of pain by blocking the small nerves that connect with the joint. This is also done under fluoroscopy as described above. Either way, you will be given a "pain diary" after the procedure which will make it easy for you to keep track of your pain for a week prior to your next office visit. This will help the doctor to decide whether the radiofrequency denervation (RFD) is a good treatment option for you.

Radiofrequency Denervation

Radiofrequency (RFD) denervation is considered to be a safe, proven way of treating chronic facet joint pain. It is generally indicated for individuals who have had spinal pain for at least 3 months and the source of the pain has been determined to be the facet joint, usually by performing medial branch blocks (see above).



Under X-ray guidance, the doctor will then place a small needle near the tiny nerves which innervate the facet joints causing the pain. A small electrode is inserted through the needle to lesion the specific nerve. Very light electrical stimulation will be performed to confirm the exact location. The nerves are then heated for about 90 seconds, causing them to lose the ability to send pain signals from the joint to your brain, and thereby relieving your back pain. It will not affect any other functioning of the lower back or other nerves.

