

Facet Injection: What to Expect

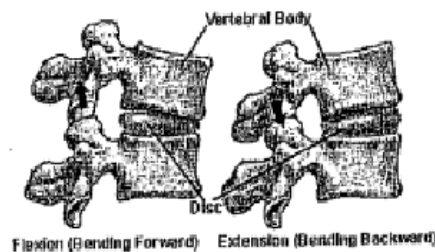
What is a facet injection?

The facet joints are the spine joints. A facet injection is putting medicine into the facet joint. This can be done for two reasons.

1. Sometimes the doctor injects these joints with anesthetic and steroid to help relieve joint pain. Facet pain can be a dull, aching pain in the back, referred pain in the buttock and thighs, or similar pain at the cervical (neck) level. The pain can be caused from arthritis or from problems in the joint, such as narrowing or inflammation. Symptoms depend on where and how severe the disease is, and how many joints are involved.
2. Other times the doctor will inject the joint nerves with anesthetic medicine to determine if the nerves are the source of pain. You will then be asked to keep a pain diary for up to 3 days and return to the clinic to determine the next steps in your care.

Before your facet injection, tell your doctor if you have any allergies or take any blood-thinning medications.

Facet Joints in Motion



How is a facet injection done?

- You will lie on your stomach or your side.
- The area will be cleansed with a solution and then numbed with a local anesthetic. This usually feels like a pinprick followed by 5 to 10 seconds of slight burning.

- Using X-ray, the doctor will put a thin needle through the skin into the appropriate area.
- Local anesthetic (and possibly steroid) will be injected. You may feel slight pressure during the injection and for several minutes after.

What happens after the injection?

You may feel warmth, tingling or slight weakness in the area injected or in the extremity involved. These feelings gradually wear off. Walk with help if you have numbness.

- If steroid is used, it will begin to work in 24 to 48 hours, with peak effect in about 3 to 5 days.
- Steroids can increase your blood sugar level. If you have diabetes, you will need to check your blood sugar more often and talk with your primary doctor as needed.
- Resume your diet and activity as tolerated. Let pain be your guide.
- Check with your doctor if you have stopped any blood-thinning pills.
- Apply ice as instructed. Use heat if you cannot tolerate ice.
- You may remove the band-aid and bathe or shower (gently) the day after your procedure. A small bruise and tenderness at the injection site is normal for 1 to 2 days.

Let us know

- If you have persistent chills or a fever over 100° F.
- If there is a major change in the pattern or level of your pain.

In case of emergency

Call your doctor. If you cannot reach him or her, go to the nearest emergency room and ask them to call your doctor.