



Medial Branch Blocks

What are Medial Branch Blocks?

Medial Branch Blocks are a diagnostic injection procedure used to determine if an individual's neck or back pain is coming from facet joints of the spine. The facet joints are small joints that connect one vertebrae bone to the next. Over time facet joints can degenerate and become inflamed. The medial branch nerves are very small nerves that supply sensation or feeling to the facet joints.

How is the procedure performed?

Medial Branch Blocks are done under x-ray guidance using a fluoroscope. Following local anesthesia, a very fine needle is placed down to the site of the medial branch nerve at each location. A small amount of anesthetic is injected at each site. The anesthetic medication blocks nerve transmission from the medial branch nerves and numbs the facet joints for approximately 4-6 hours.

What should I do after the Medial Branch Block Procedure?

There are no restrictions after the procedure and in fact it is encouraged that you do some of the normal activities that typically make your pain worse. Pay close attention to your symptoms and record how you feel for the next **4-6 hours**. Keep in mind that the **Medical Branch Block** procedure is not permanent, not a treatment, and only a diagnostic test. It is important that you communicate your results to your physician's office. Depending on the type of insurance coverage, a second procedure may be required to confirm results.

What is the next step?

If the **Medical Branch block** procedure produces significant pain relief for 4-6 hours, **Radiofrequency Rhizotomy** will likely be recommended to you. **Radiofrequency Rhizotomy** is a longer lasting procedure that involves ablating (burning) the medial branch nerves and can result in pain relief for months to years. It is an office-based procedure that is very well tolerated and also done under x-ray guidance.