

Medial Branch Block

A medial branch nerve carries pain signals from the facet joint of the spine.

What is Medial Branch block?

Medial branch block is an injection of a local anesthetic (numbing medication) near a medial branch nerve. A medial branch nerve carries pain signals from the facet joint of the spine. The facet joints are located between the bones of your spine (vertebrae). Facet joints provide stability while allowing the spine the ability to bend and twist. With wear and tear and with normal aging, the facet joints can become painful.

What is the goal of a Medial Branch block?

A medial branch block is a diagnostic injection. The goal of the injection is to temporarily numb the facet joint to see if it is the source of your pain. If you experience pain relief immediately following the procedure, your physician is assured that one or more facet joints are causing your pain. Pain relief is temporary as the local anesthetic wears off after a few hours. If medial branch blocks produce temporary relief, then radiofrequency ablation may be used to treat your pain.

How is the procedure done?

You will be lying on your stomach on an X-ray table. Blood pressure, heart rate and breathing are monitored. The injection site is cleansed with an antiseptic soap. Your physician inserts a small needle into the skin, muscle and soft tissues under fluoroscopy (X-ray) guidance. A small amount of local anesthetic (numbing medication) will be administered around the nerve. This procedure takes approximately 15 minutes.

What are the side effects and complications?

Side effects and complications are uncommon. Potential side effects and complications include:

- Allergic reaction to medications
- Increased pain at the injection sites
- Temporary numbness and weakness in your arms or legs

How should I prepare myself for this procedure?

- You should have a driver available to give you a ride home after the procedure.
- If you are on any blood thinners, please call the clinic at 701-551-6980 to receive instructions about your medication.

When should I call my doctor?

You should call us immediately if any of the following occur:

- If you experience any swelling, redness, or drainage from the site of the injection
- If you have a fever greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit
- If you experience a new numbness or weakness in your arms or legs