

Facet Joint Injection: Before Your Procedure

What is a facet joint injection?

A facet joint injection is a shot of medicine to help with pain from arthritis. The injection goes into your neck or back. Where you get your shot depends on where your pain is.

Facet joints connect your vertebrae to each other along the back of your spine. Problems in these joints can cause long-term (chronic) pain in the neck or back.

Numbing medicine is injected into the facet joint to see if that is the cause of your pain. If it does help your pain, your doctor may add a steroid medicine to the injection. Steroids reduce swelling and pain, but they don't always work.

How do you prepare for the procedure?

Procedures can be stressful. This information will help you understand what you can expect. And it will help you safely prepare for your procedure.



Preparing for the procedure

- Be sure you have someone to take you home. Anesthesia and pain medicine will make it unsafe for you to drive or get home on your own.
- Understand exactly what procedure is planned, along with the risks, benefits, and other options.
- If you take a medicine that prevents blood clots, your doctor may tell you to stop taking it before your procedure. Or your doctor may tell you to keep taking it. (These medicines include aspirin and other blood thinners.) Make sure that you understand exactly what your doctor wants you to do.
- Tell your doctor ALL the medicines, vitamins, supplements, and herbal remedies you take. Some may increase the risk of problems during your procedure. Your doctor will tell you if you should stop taking any of them before the procedure and how soon to do it.
- Make sure your doctor and the hospital have a copy of your advance directive. If you don't have one, you may want to prepare one. It lets others know your health care wishes. It's a good thing to have before any type of surgery or procedure.

What happens on the day of the procedure?



- Follow the instructions exactly about when to stop eating and drinking. If you don't, your procedure may be canceled. If your doctor told you to take your medicines on the day of the procedure, take them with only a sip of water.
- Take a bath or shower before you come in for your procedure. Do not apply lotions, perfumes, deodorants, or nail polish.
- Take off all jewelry and piercings. And take out contact lenses, if you wear them.

At the hospital or surgery center



- Bring a picture ID.
- You may get medicine that relaxes you or puts you in a light sleep. The area being worked on will be numb.
- The procedure will take 10 to 30 minutes.

When should you call your doctor?



- You have questions or concerns.
- You don't understand how to prepare for your procedure.
- You become ill before the procedure (such as fever, flu, or a cold).
- You need to reschedule or have changed your mind about having the procedure.

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