Facet Joint Injection for Pain

This is a nerve block done as a test to see if the pain you have in your back is due to facet joint disease. You will receive about 2-6 hours of pain relief from the injection.

Facet joints have nerves that carry the pain signals to the spinal cord and then to the brain, where the pain is noticed. If these nerves are blocked or numbed, they will not be able to carry the pain signals. If your pain is from facet joint arthritis, you should have relief from pain and stiffness for a couple of hours. Based on your results from this test, your doctor will talk with you about future treatment to manage your pain.

Before your test is done
Be sure to talk to your doctor before the injection if you:

- Have any allergies
- Take a blood thinning medicine such as Coumadin
- Show any signs of an active infection, such as fever or chills
- Are pregnant or think you might be

What to expect
The nerve block takes only a few minutes. Your skin is numbed first. A needle is inserted through the skin and into the deeper tissues. The doctor will use an x-ray machine to guide the needle to the right spot. Numbing medicine is injected into the joint. You may feel some pain with the injection.
After the test, you need to stay for 30-40 minutes to check your pain relief. It is safest for you to have an adult to take you home after this test.

**Possible side effects**

For 12 – 24 hours after the injection, you may have pain or bruising at the site of needle insertion. If this occurs, apply an ice pack for 15 minutes every hour to help relieve the pain. Over the counter pain medicine such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen may also be helpful.

**When to call**

Call the Spine Center at (614) 293-2225 if you have:

- Any signs of infection, such as redness, swelling, fever, or chills
- Low back feels tender to touch especially near the tailbone or it becomes more severe
- Changes in muscle function, such as weakness of a leg
- A severe sustained headache, unlike a common headache

- Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.