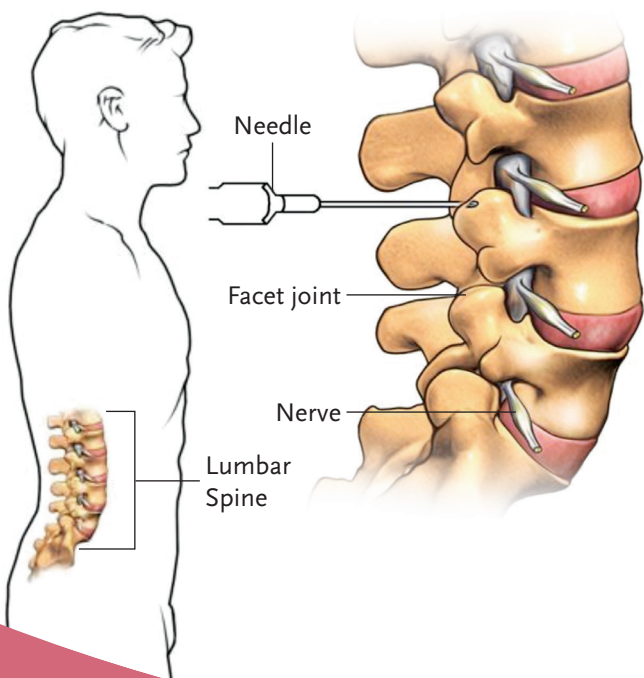


# Facet / Nerve Block Injection



# What is a nerve / facet block injection and how is it performed?

An image guided nerve / facet joint injection involves a radiologist (specialist doctor) using either X-ray guidance (fluoroscopy) or a computed tomography (CT) scanner to guide the injection containing a mixture of corticosteroid (or 'steroid') and local anaesthetic into one or multiple levels of the affected facet joints or nerve roots via a thin needle. The injections are designed to decrease inflammation in the facet / nerve root joint and will often reduce pain.

The needle is inserted into the facet joints, which are located on each side of the vertebra and connect the vertebra of the back together. The injection helps reduce inflammation in the tissue of the facet joint.

The nerve roots emerge from either side of the vertebral column, and may be impinged or compressed at these locations. Injection of the nerve roots are to reduce the degree of pain from such compressions.

## What is a Nerve root / Facet joint Block?

A nerve block is an anaesthetic or anti-inflammatory injection targeted towards a certain nerve or group of nerves to treat pain. The purpose of the injection is to “turn off” a pain signal coming from a specific location in the body or to decrease inflammation in that area. A facet joint injection also addresses pain arising from pathology of the facet joints.

Imaging guidance, such as X-ray fluoroscopy or computed tomography (CT Scan), may be used to help the doctor place the needle in exactly the right location so that the patient can receive maximum benefit from the injection.

### Preparation

Usually no special preparation is required before the procedure. The radiologist/referring physician will explain the procedure to you and obtain your consent to proceed with their procedure.

Always bring your most recent X-Rays / CT scans / MRI films with you.

You will be asked to change to a X ray gown so that metallic objects e.g zippers and buttons do not obstruct the visualization of area of interest.

Depending on the location of your facet / nerve root joint injection, you may be asked to lie on your back or abdomen.

## Procedure

The skin over the area of the spine to be treated will be well cleansed. Next, the radiologist will numb a small area of skin with local anaesthetic. Then, the radiologist will use fluoroscopy (live x-ray) or CT imaging to direct a very small needle into the joint or next to the nerves.

The radiologist may then inject several drops of contrast dye to confirm the position of the needle. A small mixture of local anaesthetic and steroid is then slowly injected.

More than one injection may be required, depending on the number of affected nerve/facet joint. The doctor will most likely tell you when he or she inserts the needle and when the injection is done.

## Post Procedure Care

After the procedure, you will feel some minor discomfort on your neck or back. As local anaesthetic has been injected into the spine, most patients will be pain free. Patients should be able to walk freely after the procedure and are observed in the department for up to half an hour to let the medication take effect. Following this, you may be discharged if you are feeling well. You should not drive for the rest of the day. The nurse will also make sure you don't have any unexpected side effects before you leave the department. You should have someone bring / accompany you home after the procedure. You may return to work and gradually increase your activities the following day.

# What are the benefits vs. risks?

## Benefits

- Temporary pain relief
- Temporary reduction of inflammation in the region of the spine causing pain
- May help the doctor identify a more specific cause of pain
- Better ability to function in daily life without the restrictions previously caused by pain

## Risks

- Infection at the injection site
- Bleeding
- Accidental delivery of medication into the blood stream
- Unexpected spread of medication to other nerves
- Hitting the “wrong” nerve in an attempt to block the targeted nerve, if the nerves are close together

Women should always inform their physician and radiographer if there is any possibility that they are pregnant. Many imaging tests are not performed during pregnancy so as not to expose the foetus to radiation. If an x-ray is necessary, precautions will be taken to minimize radiation exposure to the baby.



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I confirm that I understand the information herein about Facet / Nerve Block Injection as it has been read by me and / or explained to me.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Passport/NRIC No: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Confirmation given before (Staff's name): \_\_\_\_\_

Staff's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Please delete as applicable