What happens after the procedure?

You will be monitored in the recovery ward for 1-2 hours and given discharge instructions before you leave.

You may feel sore for some time after the procedure. This is normal, and may be caused by muscle and nerve irritation. Your neck may feel numb, weak or itchy for a couple of weeks. Be patient, as it is normal for full pain relief to take up to 4 weeks.

How long can I expect pain relief?

Nerves regenerate after the procedure, but how long this takes varies. Your pain may or may not return when the nerves regenerate. Patients usually experience between 6 months and 2 years pain relief following a successful radiofrequency facet joint denervation. If your pain returns another radiofrequency facet joint denervation can be done.

Are there any risks from radiofrequency facet joint denervation?

There are risks associated with any procedure, and some are more common than others. You should discuss the risks associated with cervical radiofrequency facet joint denervation with your doctor.

I still have questions, what can I do?

If you still have any questions relating to your procedure you can contact the Northern Pain Centre through the phone number or email address below, or visit our website for more information.

Our locations:

Level 4, North Shore Private Hospital
Westbourne Street
St Leonards NSW 2065

Level 1, Suite 107, Q Central Building
10 Norbrik Drive
Bella Vista NSW 2153

Dale Street Medical Specialists
Unit 119/ 20 Dale Street
Brookvale NSW 2100

Suite 2, Level 1, Element Building
200 Central Coast Highway
Erina NSW 2250

T: 02 9439 6456
F: 02 9460 9230
E: admin@northernpaincentre.com.au
W: www.northernpaincentre.com.au

This pamphlet is for general education only. Specific questions or concerns should always be directed to your doctor. Your doctor can explain the possible risks or side effects.

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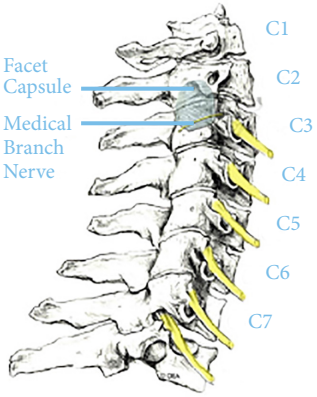
CERVICAL RADIOFREQUENCY FACET JOINT DENERVATION

for chronic neck pain and headache

What are cervical facet joints?

Facet joints are found on both sides of the spine. Each is about the size of a thumbnail. Cervical facet joints are named for the vertebrae they connect and the side of the spine they are found. The right C3/4 facet joint, for example, joins the 3rd and 4th vertebrae on the right side.



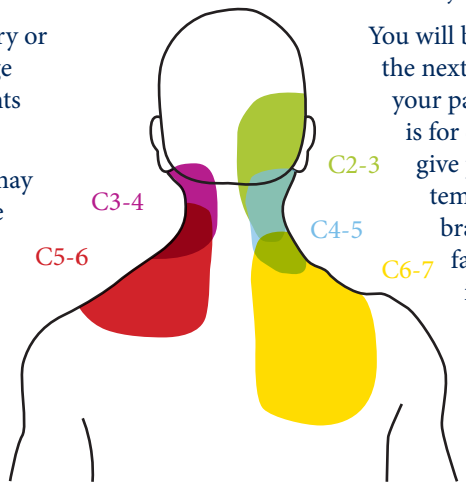
Facet joints not only connect the vertebrae, but they also guide the spine during movement.

Medial branch nerves, located near facet joints, communicate pain from the facet joints. In other words, these nerves tell the brain when a facet joint is painful.

What is cervical facet joint pain?

Cervical facet joint pain is a result of injury or degenerative change, either to the cartilage inside the joint or the connecting ligaments surrounding the joint.

Pain from an injured cervical facet joint may range from muscle tension to more severe pain. Depending on which facet joint is affected, the pain may occur in an area from your head down to your shoulder blade. The diagram shows areas of pain usually associated with specific joints.



How do I know if I have cervical facet pain?

If you have pain in one or more of these areas, and it has lasted longer than two months, you may have cervical facet pain.

Common tests such as x-rays or MRIs may not always show if a facet joint is the reason for your pain. The best way to diagnose facet pain is to block the pain signal in a medial branch nerve. This procedure is called a diagnostic medial branch block (MBB).

What is involved in a cervical MBB?

Diagnostic medial branch blocks are performed as a day procedure at North Shore Private Hospital in an operating theatre using specialised X-ray equipment. You may be given intravenous sedation by an anaesthetist to help you relax during the procedure. A needle is positioned next to the medial branch nerve and a small amount of local anaesthetic is injected to numb the nerve. Several nerves may be blocked depending on the facet joints likely to be causing your pain.

You will be given a pain diary to complete over the next 24 hours to monitor the changes to your pain following the MBB. This procedure is for diagnosis only and is not intended to give permanent pain relief. If you obtain temporary relief from the diagnostic medial branch blocks this confirms the cervical facet joints are causing your pain and indicates that cervical radiofrequency facet joint denervation may provide prolonged relief.

What is cervical radiofrequency facet joint denervation?

During this procedure, radiofrequency energy is used to disrupt the function of a cervical medial branch nerve, so that it can no longer transmit pain signals from a painful facet joint. This procedure is also known as radiofrequency ablation, neurotomy, lesioning or rhizolysis.

What happens during the procedure?

Radiofrequency facet joint denervation is performed in the same operating theatre as the medial branch block. You will be given intravenous sedation by an anaesthetist and local anaesthetic to numb the skin. A needle is positioned next to the medial branch nerve and a radiofrequency probe inserted. The doctor will then check that the needle is in the proper position by stimulating the nerve. This may cause muscle twitching and provoke some of your pain.

With the needle in the correct position, the area will be numbed. Your doctor will then use radiofrequency energy to disrupt the medial branch nerve. After the treatment more local anaesthetic mixed with steroid is injected to give post-operative pain relief and the needle is removed.