

Facet Joint Injection

What is a facet joint injection?

Facet joint injections are a procedure whereby a small amount of local anaesthetic and steroid is injected into one or more facet joints in the neck or back. Although there are occasions where facet joint injections are indicated, in general the doctors at the Northern Pain Centre do not perform them. Diagnostic medial branch blocks are more accurate than facet joint injections in diagnosing facet joint pain, and radiofrequency facet denervation is more effective as a long-term treatment for facet joint pain.

Some patients may have undergone facet joint injections previously, often performed by a radiologist. These facet joint injections can provide useful information regarding your pain. If your pain improved following these injections, even for a few hours, it may be an indication that the facet joints are a significant cause of your pain and radiofrequency facet joint denervation may provide an effective long-term treatment for your back or neck pain.

What is involved in a facet joint injection?

A facet joint injection is a minimally invasive procedure performed in the Interventional Procedure Centre (IPC) of North Shore Private Hospital as a day procedure. The IPC is Located in Royal North Shore on level 4.

Your procedure will involve you being given intravenous sedation by an anaesthetist to help you relax during the procedure. Specialised x-ray equipment allows your doctor to safely place a needle and administer a small amount of local anaesthetic and steroid.

Before my procedure

You will be contacted by North Shore Private Hospital the night before your procedure to be given instructions about admission times and fasting.

Medications

For more information please read the Preoperative Medication Instructions Category B Pain Procedures that has been given to you.

After my procedure

Following your procedure, you will spend a short period of time in the recovery ward before being discharged home. You must arrange to have someone drive you home due to the anaesthetic you receive during the procedure. You may be asked to keep a pain diary for several hours after the procedure, as a record of your response to the procedure.

It is normal for the pain to return to normal after the local anaesthetic wears off and it can take some weeks for the steroid to take full effect. The day after your procedure you may return to driving, work and your normal diet and fluids. Please remove your dressing and monitor the procedure site until healed.

Important information

You may have some numbness and weakness surrounding your normal painful area and procedure site for the hours after your procedure due to the local anaesthetic given (this will resolve but please contact the rooms or your local GP if you are concerned). It is normal to be tender at the procedure site for a short period of time after the procedure.

Please contact your local GP or the rooms if you have any allergic reactions to the medication administered in hospital; signs of infection at your procedure site (yellow discharge, abnormal pain, heat, swelling or a temperature); severe headache; severe pain at procedure site; or any questions or concerns.