



## **Facet Joint Steroid Injection**

### **Patient Information**

#### **1. Why am I having the procedure?**

Your doctor has recommended a facet joint steroid injection as part of the conservative management of your back pain. Each vertebra is connected to the one above and below it by four facet joints. They allow the vertebral column to move. Instability, degenerative arthritis, and inflammation of facet joints can cause significant pain. Facet joints are heavily supplied with nerves that sense pain. Steroids are anti-inflammatory medications. Studies have shown that injection of steroids and local anaesthetic into these facet joints causes a marked reduction in nerve activity, thus decreasing the pain. The effect usually lasts 3 to 6 months and takes up to 1 week after the injection to reach its maximum effect.

#### **2. How do I prepare for the procedure?**

If you are taking Aspirin, Warfarin or Clopidogrel it is not necessary to stop taking your medications. You need to bring all the medications that you normally take and any x-rays that you have, and your Medicare card. You will need to fast for two (2) hours before your procedure. You must also make arrangements for someone to take you home because it is unsafe to drive home after the procedure.

#### **3. What does the procedure involve?**

The technique involves inserting a needle into the facet joint. When the needle is positioned within the joint, a solution is injected, containing the steroid medication and a local anaesthetic. The procedure is brief and not usually uncomfortable. 4. What happens after the procedure? There is a short period of rest of approximately 30 minutes after the procedure, after which, you can usually go home.



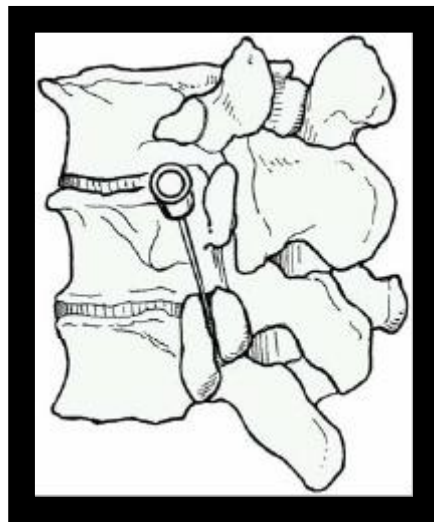
## 5. What are the risks of the procedure?

Common:

- Backache. This is usually mild and transient, occurring in only a small number of cases. A small number of patients may also have a component of muscle spasm, in addition to their nerve root pain, which can be worsened by the passage of the needle through the muscle.
- Increase in back pain. Similarly, this is usually mild and transient, occurring in only a small number of cases. It is thought to be a "pressure effect" from injecting a volume of solution into the facet joint space.

Rare:

- Infection. The needle can introduce organisms that can lead to infection. The risk is 1 in every 50,000 patients.
- Allergic reactions. In 1 in 10,000 patients, there can be allergic reactions to medications administered during the procedure.





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