

INFORMATION SHEET

FACET, SACROILIAC JOINT & EPIDURAL INJECTIONS

Facet joints are a series of small joints at the back of your spine. Sacroiliac joints are two large joints at the back of your pelvis. Both facet and sacroiliac joints can become painful when injury or wear and tear damage them. Joint injections can be useful in identifying precisely where the pain is coming from so that more accurate and effective treatments can be provided. Epidural injections are done into the narrow space of the spine adjacent to the spinal nerves and discs. They help identify which nerve is irritated and can reduce the pain from that nerve.

Procedure:

1. Ensure good hydration prior to the appointment.
2. The injection will be done using a special musculoskeletal ultrasound. This is necessary to properly guide the needle to the facet joint or epidural space.
3. You will lie on your stomach or side and the skin overlying the part of the spine to be injected will be cleansed with an antiseptic solution.
4. A local anesthetic, similar to dental freezing, will be used.
5. Once the needle is in the correct location, the doctor doing the procedure will inject the freezing with or without cortisone. Ultrasound will be used to confirm the proper placement of the needle.
6. Most patients feel only mild discomfort or mild pain during the injection.
7. The procedure takes 15 to 20 minutes.
8. A ride home is recommended, especially if an epidural or the neck facet joints are being injected.
9. **Because we are trying to determine if the injection resolves or decreases your pain, it is important that your spine be painful prior to the injection. You may need to avoid taking your pain killer medications and/or do activities that aggravate your spine pain before coming in for your injection.**
10. To reduce the risk of bleeding, please stop any anti-inflammatory or aspirin containing medications three days prior to the injection.
11. You can perform light duties for two days after your injection and then you can resume normal daily activities on day 3.

Complications:

Problems with these injections are rare but include:

- Major bleeding (rare)
- Infection (rare)
- Allergic reaction to medication
- Increased pain (2-3 days maximum)
- Nerve damage (rare): temporary arm or leg numbness or weakness occasionally occurs
- Punctured lung (rare): this is only a risk for injections of the facet joints of the "thoracic spine" (the part of the spine that attaches to the rib cage)
- Stroke or spinal cord injury (extremely rare)

Please notify your physician if you are on blood thinners, have a bleeding disorder, allergy to freezing (local) anesthetic, if you are pregnant, or if you currently have an infection.