

Diagnostic Medial Branch Block (MBB)

General Information

Your health care provider has determined that a medial branch block would be helpful in treating your chronic neck or lower back pain condition. The facet space is a joint space connecting two vertebrae where you may have developed arthritis. Placing medication in this area can help treat your pain, depending on the area of the body injected. This injection, however, is also meant to be diagnostic so your health care provider can identify whether these are the nerves that are contributing to your pain. The goal of this injection is to reduce your pain by more than 80% for up to 4 to 6 hours after the procedure.

Oftentimes, the pain will return to its original intensity. If you have had two diagnostic medial branch blocks with short term relief, there is a more permanent therapy, like a radiofrequency ablation that can be done which can provide relief for 6-12 months. These injections are commonly performed to treat a variety of pain syndromes, including:

- Neck pain/certain types of headaches
- Back and/or buttock pain

Procedure Information: What to Expect

Prior to the injection appointment, there may be some medications that need to be stopped, and your health care provider will discuss these with you. They could include blood-thinning (anticoagulant), antiplatelet medications and/or anti-inflammatory medications such as aspirin, Xarelto, Coumadin, Plavix etc.

You are brought to the pre-operative area where you will be placed in a gown. Then, you will be escorted to the procedure room. You will lay on your stomach (facing down) on a pillow or gel supports with your back or neck exposed. An X-ray/fluoroscope is used to see the bones to guide needle placement. After a cold, cleaning solution is placed on your skin, it is important not to touch the area once it is cleaned. You will then feel a pinch and a burn (much like a bee sting), which is the local anesthetic (numbing medicine). After that, you will feel a pressure and a poke. Once the facet area is accessed, medication is injected, which can include steroid, normal saline, and/or local anesthetic. This will be repeated at each facet level as necessary. Band-Aid/paper tape is applied to the injection sites.

You are then escorted to the post-operative area where you will be monitored for up to 30 minutes after the injection. When you are ready to leave, the staff will give you discharge instructions and help you make a follow up appointment if one hasn't been made already.

Post-Procedure Instructions

What should I do after the injection?

- Recommend doing activities that normally cause pain

Types of activities that we would expect you to have relief doing include:

- **Cervical**

- Looking up
- Looking down
- Looking over shoulders (i.e. driving)
- Activities requiring your to constantly move your head up and down

- **Lumbar**

- Bending forward
- Bending backward
- Twisting
- Standing/sitting for prolonged periods of time (>30 minutes)
- Getting up from a chair/seated position

- **DO NOT** participate in strenuous activities
- Resume all medications as instructed by your provider
- You should not be in sitting water (baths, hot tubs, swimming pools, lakes/ponds) for three (3) days after the procedure. **Showers are OK**
- May participate in formal physical therapy sessions 72 hours after your procedure. You may continue performing your home exercise program in the interim
- Follow instructions given on the day of the procedure to provide a report of relief from the diagnostic block
- Keep post-operative appointment to report relief

When will I notice relief?

- Immediate pain relief from the local anesthetic used in the injectate for 4 to 6 hours
- You may have soreness from the needle placement but try to focus on pain relief in the deeper part of the neck/back with activities
- **Intended goal is >80% relief for 4-6 hours after the procedure**

What other things can I expect?

- Numbness, tingling or transient weakness in the area of pain
- Some soreness around the injection site for which ice may be applied

Please contact our office (815) 398-9491 if you experience:

- Significant weakness in the arms or legs for more than 24 hours
- Redness or swelling around injection site for more than 24 hours
- Bladder or bowel accidents and/or numbness around the groin
- Fever or chills