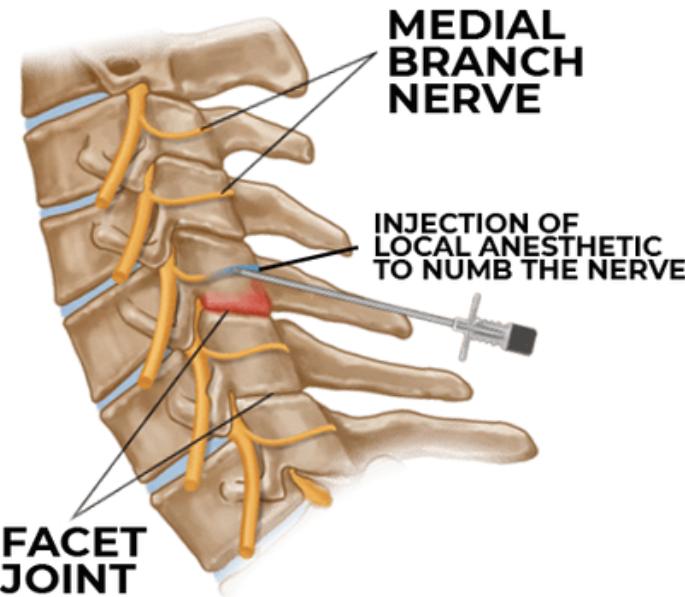


# MEDIAL BRANCH BLOCKS

## WHY AM I HURTING?

**Facet joints** are small joints in the back of the spine that form connections between each vertebra. Like many joints, these can be subject to age-related degeneration and arthritis. **Medial branch nerves**, found around the facet joints, transmit the pain from the joints to the brain. The brain receives the pain signals causing you to feel and perceive the pain in your spine.



## WHAT IS THIS PROCEDURE FOR?

Medial branch blocks (MBB) are **diagnostic** procedures where the **medial branch nerves** are numbed with a local anesthetic under fluoroscopic (X-ray) guidance. Once blocked, the nerves are unable to transmit the painful sensation to the brain. If your pain improves after a medial branch block, then we can conclude that the pain is coming from the arthritic facet joint. The procedure will only cause some minor discomfort during needle insertion, by which we will minimize by numbing the skin above the area. You will be awake for the entirety of the procedure, which will take about 15 minutes to complete.

## WHAT IS THE NEXT STEP AFTER THE INJECTION?

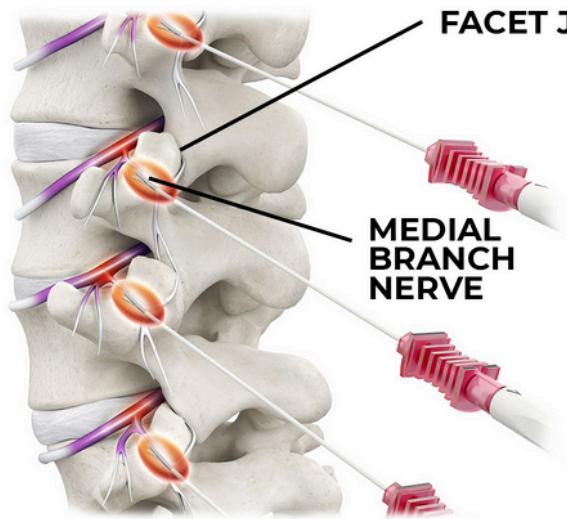
**Pain relief is expected to last between 6-8 hours.** It is important for you to monitor your pain within this time frame. Once the anesthetic medication wears off, the *pain will likely return*. During your follow up visit, 1 week after the injection, it is important to recall how you felt solely within the 6-8 hours after the procedure. If you respond well to the first block, a second branch block is indicated prior to consideration of **radiofrequency ablation**.

## TIMELINE FOR TREATMENT PLAN



Visits and procedures are typically spaced out **1 week** from each other. Procedures are done in the Fluoroscopy Suite in our Seminole Office and are scheduled pending insurance approval (*if applicable*).

# RADIOFREQUENCY ABLATION



## FACET JOINTS **WHAT IS THE PROCEDURE FOR?**

Radiofrequency ablation uses **radio frequency waves** passed through a **specialized needle** to **generate heat** around the medial branch nerves to ablate (burn) the nerve and block its ability to transmit pain signals to the brain. Radiofrequency ablation is indicated only after the patient reports benefit from two diagnostic medial branch nerve blocks.

## **HOW LONG DOES PAIN RELIEF LAST?**

In comparison to medial branch blocks, pain relief from radiofrequency ablation **typically lasts 6 months to 1 year**. The procedure generally starts working in one to two weeks but may take up to 4 weeks. The medial branch nerves are peripheral nerves and will regenerate, thus pain may likely return, but ablations can be repeated as needed. Medial Branch Blocks do not need to be repeated.

## **HOW IS THE PROCEDURE PERFORMED?**

The skin is cleansed with an antiseptic solution and then anesthetized with a numbing medication. After the skin is numb, needles are placed near the target nerve under fluoroscopic (X-ray) guidance. The nerve will then be numbed prior to starting the radiofrequency ablation. It is typical for 4 nerves to be targeted, so there are usually 4 injections performed during this procedure.

## **WHAT ARE THE RISKS AND SIDE EFFECTS?**

The most common side effect after the procedure is having pain in the area of the injection for a few days. Serious side effects and complications are rare, but are namely infection, bleeding and nerve injury. These complications are minimized by using sterile technique and use of fluoroscopy for guidance and localization of the needles.

## **WHAT IS THE NEXT STEP AFTER INJECTION?**

You must have someone to drive you home from the procedure. The next day you will receive a call from our office asking how you are doing from the procedure. You must monitor your pain levels as best as you can. This will help us to measure your response to the injection and determine the next most appropriate plan of care.