

INTERVENTIONAL PAIN CLINIC

CERVICAL FACET INJECTION



Cervical Facet Injection is a treatment option for patients who have suffered for more than two months from cervical facet pain. These symptoms include pain originating from the neck, shoulders, upper back or as headache pain.

A Cervical Facet Injection is a procedure where anesthetic (numbing agent) and steroid solutions (anti-inflammatory) are injected into one or more of your cervical facet joints to diagnose or treat cervical facet pain.

Cervical facet pain depends on the joints affected, and you may feel pain if the cervical facet joint itself, or the cartilage inside of the joint, or the connecting ligaments surrounding the cervical facet joint have been injured. The pain experienced may feel like simple muscle tension or it may be much more severe.

In diagnosis, this procedure is necessary because traditional X-rays and MRIs may not show that a facet joint is the cause of the patient's pain and in treatment, this procedure can provide pain relief to the patient. When pain relief is experienced and the patient is able to move more easily, it can show the physician which facet joint is responsible for the patient's pain.

The success of a Cervical Facet Injection is dependent upon the amount of existing inflammation and the number of injured areas in need of treatment. If there is no underlying bone or joint disorder, then a single injection could potentially provide long-term pain relief. If your pain is caused by injury to multiple areas, you may only experience relief from some of your symptoms with a single injection. When successful, the effects of an injection can last several months, and then additional treatment is usually necessary.

What does the procedure involve?

This is typically an outpatient procedure performed in the Operating Room (OR), under strict sterile conditions. In the OR, the patient may be connected to monitoring equipment (blood pressure cuff, blood oxygen monitoring device and EKG monitor).

The procedure is performed with you lying on your stomach. Your physician or nurse may start an intravenous line to administer medication to help you relax, and you may receive an antibiotic. Your physician will cleanse your back with antiseptic solution and inject a local anesthetic, numbing the area to minimize discomfort during the procedure. With that you may briefly feel a burning sensation.

With the assistance of an X-ray machine, a Fluoroscope, the physician will insert another needle to inject a radiopaque dye (contrast solution) to ensure the safe and proper positioning of the needle directly into the facet joint. When the needle is positioned correctly the anesthetic and steroid injection will be administered. After the procedure, you will be asked to remain at the Clinic until your physician is confident you are ready to leave, and you will be provided discharge instructions.

What should I do before the procedure?

- Do not eat or drink anything after midnight the morning of your procedure, unless directed otherwise by your physician.
- Tell your physician all prescription and over-the-counter medications you are taking, including herbal and vitamin supplements.
- If you are diabetic, discuss your medications with your physician.
- Your physician will tell you if and when you should discontinue any medications.
- Tell your physician if you develop a cold, fever, or flu-like symptoms prior to your scheduled procedure.

How long will the procedure take?

Depending on the number of areas to be treated, this procedure can take anywhere from twenty minutes to two hours.

Will I be sedated for the procedure?

Yes, but it is necessary that you be able to communicate with the physician in order to tell him/her what sensations you are experiencing during the procedure, so you will only be administered enough medication to keep you comfortable.

What should I do after the procedure?

- Do not drive for the remainder of the day of your procedure. You must arrange for an adult to drive you home.
- Drink plenty of clear liquids to assist in removing the dye from your kidneys.
- You should rest for the remainder of the day.
- Keep the treated area clean and dry to help prevent infection.
- You should move in ways that caused you pain prior to the injection to see if the pain still exists, but do not overdo it.
- You may experience immediate pain relief and numbness in your back, lasting up to six hours after the injection. This means the injection reached the right location.
- You may then later experience the return of your pain, and it may even be worse for one or two days. This is normal, and may be caused by needle irritation or the steroid itself.
- Steroids can take 48 -72 hours to take effect and can even take as long as a week to start working.
- Depending on how you feel, you should be able to return to work the next day.

What are the risks and side effects of a Cervical Facet Injection?

As with any procedure there are potential risks and side effects to be aware of. Anytime an injection punctures the skin there is potential for infection, and precisely why sterile conditions are used for such procedures. Contact your physician immediately if you notice signs of infection at the injection site or you experience fever or chills.

Please Note: This handout is intended for general education use only. Specific questions or concerns should be discussed with your physician, who can explain all possible risks or side effects of this procedure in relation to your specific medical condition.

For more information about procedures available at Trinity Mother Frances Interventional Pain Clinic in Jacksonville, please visit tmfhc.org or call (903) 541-4599.