
**THE CENTER FOR PAIN MEDICINE
MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL**

FACET JOINT INJECTION

Information Sheet for Patients

What is a facet joint injection? A facet joint injection involves placing a local anesthetic (numbing medication) with a steroid (anti-inflammatory) into a facet joint of the spine. The facet joints are located between the vertebrae; there are two facet joints between each pair of vertebrae. The facet joints provide stability while allowing the spine the ability to bend and twist. With wear and tear and with normal aging, the facet joints can become painful.

What is the goal of facet joint injection? The goal is to provide pain relief so that you are able to resume normal activities and in some cases continue physical therapy.

What happens before treatment? You will be escorted to a room where a nurse will conduct a pre-procedure interview. The physician who will perform the injection reviews your medical history, previous imaging studies, physical exam and current medications to help plan the best approach for the injection.

What happens during the procedure? The patient remains awake during the entire process. Blood pressure, heart rate and breathing are continually monitored. Lying face down on the procedure table the injection site is cleansed with an antiseptic. This procedure involves inserting a needle through the skin, muscle and soft tissues, so there is some slight discomfort involved. An injection of local anesthetic (numbing medication) will be administered in the area where you are experiencing pain. This procedure takes approximately 30 minutes.

