

# FACET JOINT INJECTION

Information provided courtesy of Bill Nelems Pain & Research Centre

A facet joint injection is an injection of an anesthetic with a long lasting steroid (“cortisone”) in the facet joints. Facet joints are located in the back and neck at each vertebral level. They are paired (right and left) and are surrounded by a joint capsule like the finger joints.

## **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF FACET INJECTIONS?**

The injected steroid reduces the inflammation in the joint space. This can reduce pain and other symptoms caused by inflammation such as nerve irritation.

## **HOW LONG DOES THE INJECTION TAKE?**

The actual injection takes only a few minutes.

## **WHAT IS ACTUALLY INJECTED?**

The injection consists of a mixture of local anesthetic (like novocaine) and the steroid medication. Many times prior to injecting the medicine, a small volume of contrast dye is used to confirm proper needle placement.

## **WILL THE INJECTION(S) HURT?**

The procedure is done under local anesthetic and usually tolerated well by patients without any form of sedation.

## **HOW IS THE INJECTION PERFORMED?**

It is done with the patient lying on the stomach with fluoroscopic (x-ray) or ultrasound guidance. The skin in the back is cleaned with antiseptic solution and then the injection is carried out. After the injection, you are placed on your back or on your side.

## **WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT AFTER THE INJECTION?**

Immediately after the injection, you may feel that your pain may be gone or quite less. This is due to the local anesthetic injected. This will last for a few hours. Your pain may return and you may have a sore back or neck for a day or two. This is due to the mechanical process of needle insertion as well as initial irritation from the steroid itself. You should start noticing pain relief on the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> day.

