

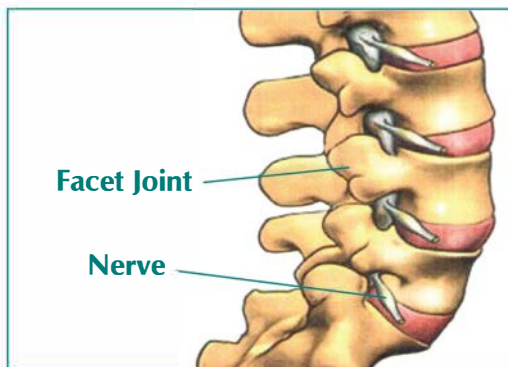
Intra-articular Facet Blocks

This handout answers some of the most common questions patients have about intra-articular facet blocks. If you have other questions, please do not hesitate to call the Norman Prince Spine Institute at **401-444-3777** (Providence) or **401-845-1190** (Newport).

What is an intra-articular facet block?

An intra-articular facet block is a procedure used to treat neck and back pain in patients with irritated facet joints. These are the joints in your spine that allow you to bend and twist your back and neck. Daily wear and tear can bother the facet joints and cause you pain.

During the procedure, the area in and around the facet joint is injected with a mixture of a local anesthetic and a steroid. The local anesthetic will numb the area. The steroid may help lower the swelling, which should reduce your pain.



Do I have to do anything to prepare for the test?

Once your test is scheduled, we will give you instructions on how to prepare. For your safety, please tell us if you:

- Take a blood thinner (for example, warfarin/ Coumadin, Lovenox, or Plavix);
- Take any medication that contains aspirin or an anti-inflammatory drugs, such as ibuprofen (for example, Advil or Motrin) or naproxen (for example, Aleve);
- Have a condition that prevents your blood from clotting normally; or
- Have any allergies to latex, local anesthetics, X-ray dye, or seafood.

Please plan to have someone drive you home after your test. **If someone cannot drive you home, the procedure will be canceled.**

Does the test hurt?

Before the test begins, your doctor will inject you a medicine to numb the skin over the facet joints. You may feel some stinging from the medicine. You may also feel some pressure when your doctor injects the local anesthetic and steroid in the area in and around our facet joints.



What happens during the test?

A intra-articular facet block generally involves the steps below:

1. Your vital signs (such as your blood pressure and pulse) will be measured. You will also be asked some general questions about your health.
2. You will lie on your stomach on the procedure table. (If you cannot lie on your stomach, please let us know.) Then the skin over your facet joints will be cleaned and covered with a special sheet. This will help keep the area free of germs.
3. The doctor will inject a medicine to numb the skin. Then he or she will inject contrast (a substance that will help highlight the area on X-rays). If you are allergic to contrast, your doctor will discuss your options with you.
4. With the helps of a special X-ray, your doctor will inject the local anesthetic and steroid in the area in and around the facet joints. This X-ray, along with the contrast, helps your doctor inject the medicine in the right spot.

The procedure takes about 15-20 minutes. You will be awake during the test and may ask questions at any time.

Are there any side effects from the test?

Side effects from an intra-articular facet block are rare. The most common side effect is pain where you were injected.



How will I feel after the test?

- The local anesthetic will wear off in 4-5 hours. At that time, your usual level of pain may return until the steroid starts working. This can take 2-10 days.
- If you have no pain relief from the facet block, your doctor will work with you to find the source of your pain and explore your treatment options.

For more information, please call the Norman Prince Spine Institute at [401-444-3777](tel:401-444-3777) (Providence) or [401-845-1190](tel:401-845-1190) (Newport).