



Comprehensive Pain Physicians

201 S. Buena Vista Street, Suite 238, Burbank, CA 91505
Tel: 818-325-2088, Fax: 818-563-6201

Reginald Ajakwe, M.D. Raymond Tatevossian, M.D.
www.CPPpaincenter.com

Lumbar Facet Joint Injection

What are lumbar facet joints and why are facet joint injections helpful? Lumbar facet joints are small joints a little larger than the size of the thumb nails located in pairs on the back of the spine. They provide stability and guide motion in the low back. If the joints become painful they may cause pain in the low back, abdomen, buttocks, groin or legs.

A facet joint injection serves several purposes. First, by placing numbing medicine into the joint, the amount of immediate pain relief experienced will help confirm or deny the joint as a source of pain. Additionally, steroid will help to reduce any inflammation that may exist within the joint(s).

General Pre-Injection Instructions: Be sure to tell your doctor if you have an allergy, particularly to iodine. If you will be receiving sedation, you should **NOT** eat the morning of the procedure. If a patient is an insulin dependent diabetic and receiving sedation, they may need to change their morning dose of insulin to account for not eating the morning of the procedure. Patients may take their routine medications (i.e., high blood pressure and diabetic medications, e.g. Glucophage). Patients should continue to take pain medications or anti-inflammatory medications the day of their procedure. If a patient is on Coumadin or another blood thinner, they should notify the doctor so an appropriate plan can be made for stopping the medication before the procedure. **Although not mandatory, we generally recommend that a driver should accompany the patient and be responsible for getting them home.**

What happens during the procedure? The patient is placed on the procedure table on their stomach so the physician can visualize these joints using x-ray guidance. The skin on the low back is scrubbed using antibacterial soap. Next, the physician numbs a small area of skin with numbing medicine. This medicine stings for several seconds. After the numbing medicine has been given time to be effective, the physician directs a very small needle using x-ray guidance into the joint. A small amount of contrast (dye) is injected to insure proper needle position inside the joint space. Then, a small mixture of numbing medicine (local anesthetic) and anti-inflammatory (steroid) is injected. One or several joints may be injected depending on location of the patient's usual pain.

What happens after the procedure? Immediately after the procedure, the patient will get up and be asked to ambulate and to try to imitate something that would normally bring about their usual pain. Patients are then asked to report the percentage of pain relief.

The leg(s) may feel weak or numb for a few hours. This is fairly uncommon, but does occasionally happen. The patient will follow-up in clinic to discuss their response to the procedure.

Patients may return to normal activities on the day of the procedure. **Driving is discouraged on the day of the procedure.**