



CONNECTICUT BACK CENTER

*Comprehensive Spinal Care*

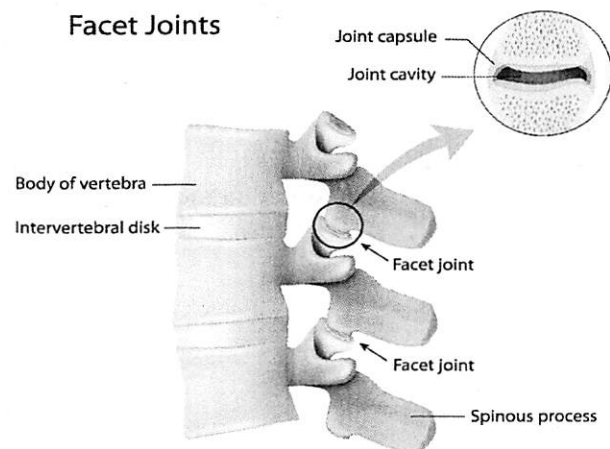
## Medial Branch Block

### Overview:

A nerve block injection is a minimally invasive procedure that can temporarily relieve joint or nerve pain. The injection is commonly used to help diagnose lower back pain. A local anesthetic is placed directly around a medial branch nerve to detect if the pain is coming from the nerve or the joint. The effects are usually temporary, if successful then a radio frequency ablation may be recommended.

### What is a Medial Branch Nerve?

Medial branch nerves are the small nerves that control sensation to part of the spine known as the facet joint. They do not control any muscle sensation in the arms or legs. The facet joint is where each vertebra in the spine connects with the next. When these joints develop arthritis they can be a source of pain.



### What is a Branch Block?

A nerve block is an injection of anesthetic on or near the nerve connected to the specific facet joint. The injection temporarily blocks the pain.

### What Happens After the Injection?

This type of injection can be both therapeutic and diagnostic. Whichever result you have gives you physician more information about your pain. Generally, one of the following 3 things happens:

1. The pain does not go away- this means the pain is likely not coming from the facet joint.
2. The pain goes away for a few hours but comes back- The pain is probably coming from the joint
3. The pain goes away, returns within a few hours, but then gets better over the next few days- This means the medication had a long lasting effect on the pain.

### What if I have relief and the the pain comes back?

You may be a candidate for a procedure called radio-frequency ablation (also known as a rhizotomy). This is a procedure that can inactivate the nerve and relieve pain for up to a year. The procedure is an electrical current that heats the nerve to 80 degrees for ninety seconds.

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### **Risks of Nerve Block:**

This is a safe procedure. However, like with any other procedure there are risks, side effects, and the possibility of complications. The anesthetic medication may spread to nearby nerves causing weakness or numbness that can last several hours. You may have increased pain for a few days after the injection, particularly at the location of the injection. People with diabetes may have a temporary elevation in their blood sugar.

### **Preparing for Treatment:**

Patients are asked to stop taking aspirin or blood thinning medications several days before the procedure. Dr. Eisler will preform the nerve block in the office under fluoroscope. It is suggested that you make arrangements to have someone drive you to and from your appointment the day of the injection.

### **Do They Hurt?**

Most people say that the burning or stinging sensation due to the numbing medication is the most uncomfortable part. During the radio frequency lesioning some people report feeling pain for 10-15 seconds.

### **When Can I Resume My Activities:**

It is recommended that you do not drive for the remainder of the day after your procedure. Do not use heat on the injected areas or soak in water for the remainder of the day after the injection.