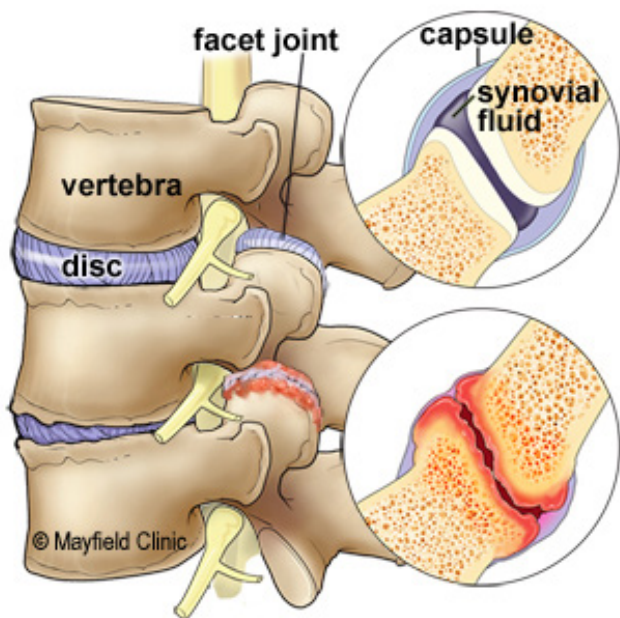


FACET INJECTION

Facet joints are small joints located at each segment of the spine. We rely on these joints for stability and guidance in our movements. Stress, chronic strain, injuries, arthritis and other conditions can cause pain and inflammation within the facet joints. A facet injection is a minimally invasive procedure that can relieve facet joint pain.

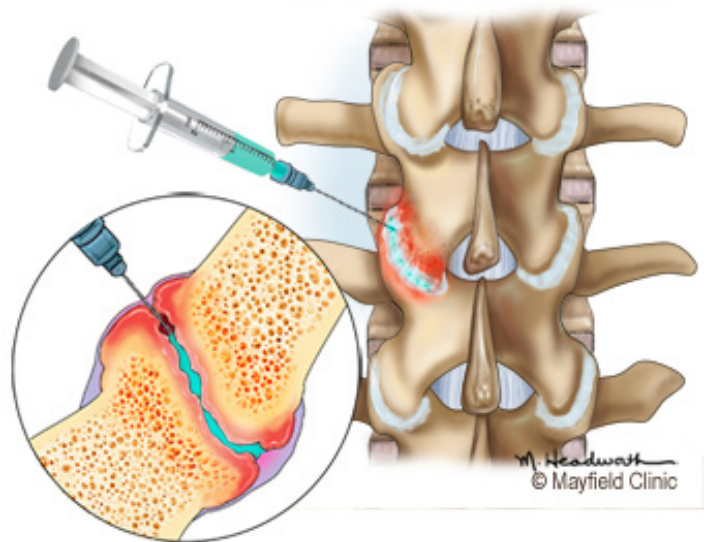
CANDIDATES FOR A FACET INJECTION

Generally, anyone with back or neck pain that likely originates within a facet joint is a candidate for facet injections. However, anyone with allergies to medications, underlying bleeding disorders or active infections should avoid this treatment. A consultation with a physician is the best way to determine if facet injections are both safe and ideal in a specific situation.



WHAT IS A FACET INJECTION?

During a facet injection, a physician injects a small amount of local anesthetic to numb the facet joint for pain-relief purposes. The injection may also contain medication. Physicians use real-time X-ray technology to guide a thin, hollow needle to the right position within the facet joint.



Facet joint injections have two purposes. The first purpose is a diagnostic one. Once the facet joint is numbed, a physician is able to determine if the facet joint was the true source of the pain and inflammation affecting a patient. If a patient experiences pain relief once the facet joint has been numbed, this means that the facet joint was probably the source of the issue. Facet joint injections also provide benefits for pain management. When a time-released steroid called cortisone is included with the injection, patients can enjoy long-term pain relief.

FACET INJECTION

RESULTS OF A FACET INJECTION

If a facet joint is the cause of pain and inflammation, the most likely result following a facet injection will be instant pain relief. Most patients experience relief within one to five days following injections. No downtime is required.

In addition to experiencing pain relief after a successful facet injection, a patient can also expect relief from inflammation. The numbing effect of the injection can also make it possible for the patient to tolerate physical therapy, manipulations and rehabilitative exercises that would cause extreme discomfort while living with active pain. If no improvement is noticed following an injection, the physician and patient can rule out the facet joint as a cause of pain before moving on to additional diagnostic work.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF A FACET INJECTION

Like all medical procedures, facet injections carry some potential risks. However, this is considered a safe, noninvasive and well-tolerated procedure. There is a possibility that the needle used during an injection could accidentally hit a nerve. While this is rare, contact with a nerve can cause pain, numbness, weakness and potential nerve damage. The injection aspect of this treatment also creates a potential for infection. Increased blood pressure, bleeding, allergic reaction, spinal cord damage and increased pain are some of the potential side effects associated with facet injections. However, side effects and complications are rare with this procedure.

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