



## PATIENT TEACHING HANDOUT

### Facet Joint Nerve Injection – Medial Branch Blocks

#### *What is a Facet Joint Nerve Injection?*

A facet joint nerve injection is a paraspinal injection of local anesthetic (and sometimes a corticosteroid anti-inflammatory medication). The facet is a joint that connects one vertebra (bone of the spine) to another. The needle is placed over the nerve that provides sensation to the facet joint. This nerve is the Medial Branch.

#### *What are the goals of a Facet Joint Nerve Injection?*

- to aid in diagnosing the cause of your pain,
- to reduce and possibly eliminate your pain, and to increase your function.

#### *How will a Facet Joint Nerve Injection help my condition?*

- The injection serves as a diagnostic test to see if pain is coming from the joint itself. If your pain disappears with the injection then it is clear that the pain originates from the joint.
- Therapeutic facet joint nerve injections with local anesthetic and steroids may be effective in the treatment of your pain. Your physician may offer you a facet nerve rhizotomy procedure to provide you with longer-term pain relief.

#### *How do I prepare for a Facet Joint Nerve Injection?*

- If you are taking any anticoagulant ("blood thinner") medication, tell your doctor before scheduling the procedure.
- You are not permitted to drive after your procedure. You must have someone to drive you home.
- Unless your doctor advises otherwise, 10 days before your procedure, STOP taking any Aspirin-containing products.
- Starting 3 days before your procedure, STOP taking any nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil), or naproxen (Aleve).
- You may eat a light meal before your procedure.
- PLEASE COME TO YOUR INJECTION IN PAIN; Avoid taking your pain medications the morning of the procedure.

#### *What happens during a Facet Joint Nerve Injection?*

- You will be positioned either lying face down or face up with pillows for comfort.
- The area for the injection will be washed with an antiseptic solution and covered with sterile drapes.
- The doctor will inject local anesthetic to numb the injection site.
- An X-ray machine (fluoroscopy) and ultrasound machine will be used to guide placement of the small needles onto the facet joint nerves.

#### *How long is the procedure?*

The entire procedure takes about 15-20 minutes to perform.

#### *What happens after the procedure?*

- The local anesthetic will begin working within 15 minutes following the procedure. The local anesthetic will wear off after 2-6 hours following the procedure.
- Your physician will notify you if steroids are used during your procedure. The steroid medication takes 48 – 72 hours after your procedure to begin working.
- You may continue taking regularly scheduled medications.
- The day after your procedure, you may resume normal daily activities.
- You may have pain, bruising, and soreness for 2-3 days after the procedure. Use ice to alleviate the soreness.
- You will be instructed to call Pittsburgh Pain Physicians within **24hrs** with an update on your pain relief.

Please call Pittsburgh Pain Physicians if you notice any of the following: increased pain, swelling, redness, fever, severe headache, or worsening weakness in your arms or legs. If you are diabetic, your blood sugar may increase slightly after the procedure. Diabetic patients should monitor their blood sugar closely for 3 days following the procedure.

If you have any questions or concerns about this procedure please call Pittsburgh Pain Physicians at **412-533-2202**.

