



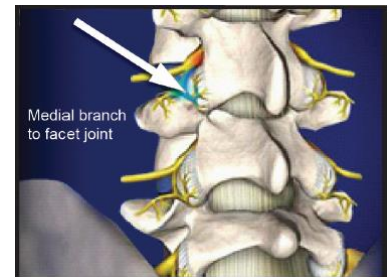
Facet Joint Radiofrequency Ablation

Procedure Information

Facet joint radiofrequency ablation is used to treat back and neck pain caused by injury or arthritis of the facet joints. The procedure involves the ablation or heating of the facet joint nerves under local anaesthetic to stop them from sending pain signals to the brain.

SPINE ANATOMY

The human spine is comprised of 24 bones called vertebrae which are stacked on top of each other to create the spine. There are four facet joints associated with each vertebra, a pair that face up and another pair that face downward. Each facet joint is supplied by two nerves, the medial branches of the dorsal rami (spinal nerves), which control sensation to the facet joint. These nerves are responsible for the pain experienced due to degeneration or inflammation of the lumbar facet joint. They do not control sensations or muscles in your skin or surrounding tissues.



FACET JOINT SYNDROME

Facet joint syndrome is a degenerative arthritis-like condition that can cause significant back and neck pain. As we age, the vertebral discs that are between the joints shrink which reduces the cushioning and increases pressure through the facet joints. Facet joints may also be damaged through traumatic injury. Lumbar facet joint syndrome often results from the ageing process while cervical and thoracic facet joint syndrome tends to be caused by injury.

THE PROCEDURE

Facet joint radiofrequency ablation is done as an inpatient by a radiologist or pain specialist. You are awake for the procedure however sedation is available. You may need to fast for a short period beforehand and please inform your specialist if you are taking any blood thinning medications such as Aspirin or Warfarin as these may need to be ceased. Please ensure you bring any relevant scans with you.

You will lie on your stomach on an X-ray table and the specialist will identify the target location. The site will be cleaned before a local anaesthetic is injected into skin. Using X-ray guidance, the specialist will insert a needle into the target site and the radiofrequency ablation (high-frequency heat) will be applied.

The procedure will take 30-60 minutes. Once completed, you will be observed for ill-effects for a short time before being discharged. Please ensure you have someone to drive you home. Some minor discomfort may be felt for 1-2 days following the procedure with pain relief typically felt 1-3 weeks afterwards.

SIDE EFFECTS & RISKS

Side effects after this procedure are rare but may include worsening pain or infection of the skin at the injection site or allergic reaction to the medication used.

If you have any concerns, please contact the radiology department where you underwent the procedure. **Please call 000 if you are affected by any life-threatening symptoms.**

