



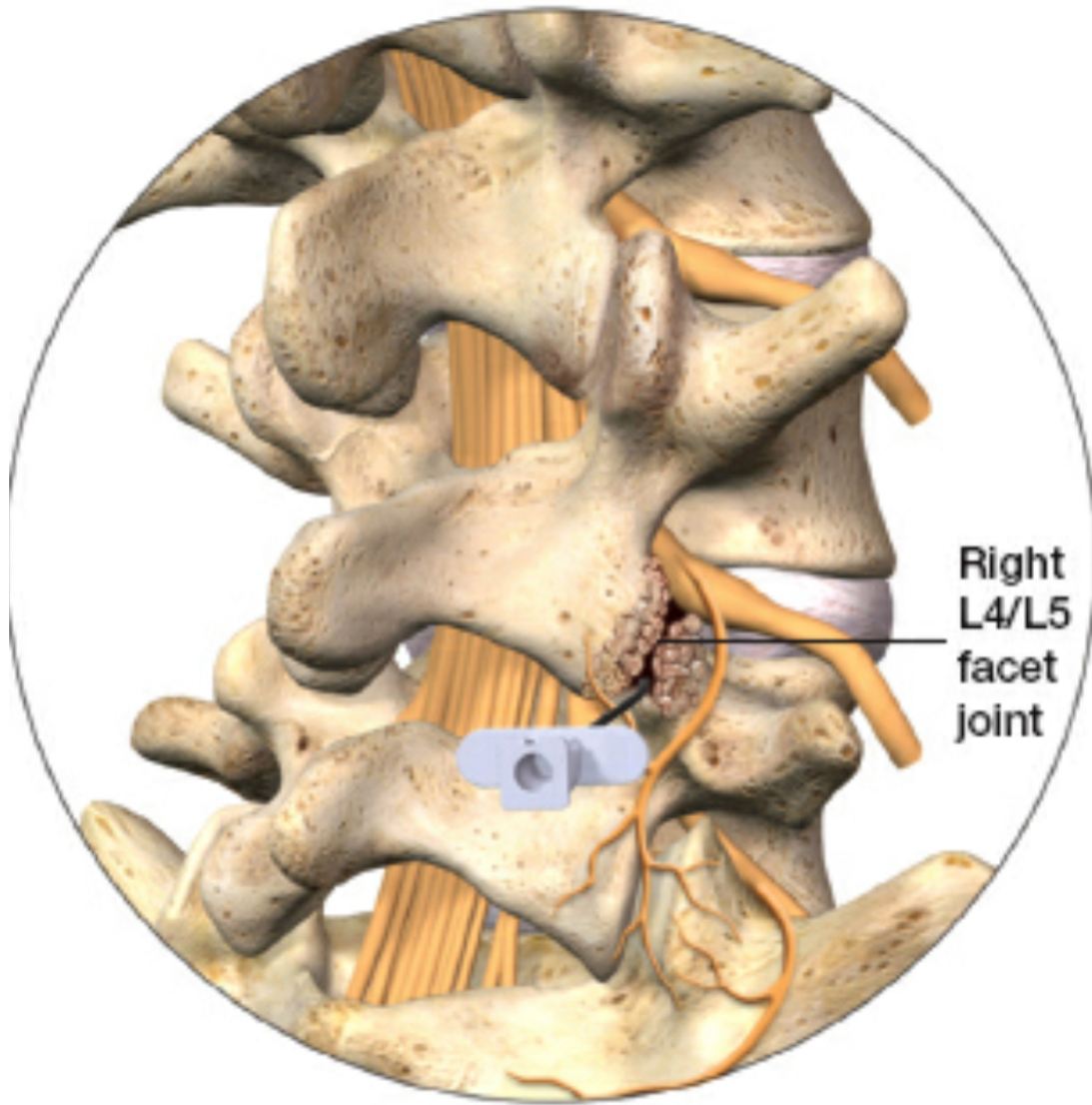
## What is Medial branch Radiofrequency Ablation?

A Medial Branch Block is an injection of drugs into the joints in the neck or back that are thought to have arthritis. The injection is to determine if further treatment with a heat source called a radio frequency ablation will be beneficial. The ablation is actually heating up the nerves that you numbed before with the injection.

## Why perform a Medial branch ablation?

A Medial Branch Block ablation is performed in order to heat the nerves which are feeling the arthritis in the spine. When there is a problem with one of the joints in the spine, it can cause pain by pinching a branch of the nerves called the medial branch. Heating these nerves can give pain relief for one year.

**If you are taking a blood thinning medication you must let us know beforehand as this increases your risk tremendously. We will discuss your options and optimize the safety of this procedure.**



## Can anyone have a Medial Branch Ablation?

Most people can have a medial branch block. If you have any localized infection, such as a boil on your neck or back, or a generalized infection, the procedure would not be performed until the infection has cleared up.



The procedure is done under X-ray to ensure that the ablation is given in the correct place. If you are female and below the age of 55 you will be asked about the date of your last period, and if it is more than 28 days ago you, will be asked whether you are likely to be pregnant. Although the amount of radiation used is small, there is always a risk to the fetus. Occasionally we may need to ask you to have a pregnancy test.

The procedure cannot be done on anyone who has a problem with their blood clotting. Most commonly this is due to taking blood-thinning medication.

**If you are taking a blood thinning medication you must let us know beforehand as this increases your risk tremendously. We will discuss your options and optimize the safety of this procedure.**

## What are the risks and complications?

The most common problems relate to local anesthetic which may be used. Local anesthetic could be injected into a blood vessel which can cause lightheadedness, seizure, numbness around the mouth.

Infection is always a risk whenever anything is injected into the body, and we take precautions to avoid this by performing the procedure as a fully sterile technique. If an infection does get in it can produce the symptoms of feeling unwell, headache, and stiffness of the neck. This can occur quite soon after the injection.

There is the possibility of an abscess forming in the epidural



space, which may occur after two or three days, and would give rise to pain in the back and worsening pain in the legs. Similar symptoms may occur if there is a blood clot within the epidural space. This is more likely to occur if you are taking medicines to thin the blood. Overall, these complications are extremely rare. However, if you start to suffer from any of these symptoms, you must go and see your doctor or the Emergency Room of your local hospital urgently (do not go to Urgent Care) , and inform them that you have had an epidural injection.

## How is the procedure performed?

The procedure is performed in the operating room or office under live X-ray. When you arrive a small needle may be inserted into one of your veins, for safety, so that should any drugs be required, they can be easily given. You will be expected to lie on the table face down.

Local anesthetic is injected into the skin and deeper tissues to reduce the discomfort of the procedure. However, when the needle is inserted there will be a feeling of someone pushing in your neck, which is normal. The needle may be inserted between your shoulder blades at the base of your neck. When the operator has put the needle in, X-rays will be taken to confirm that the needle is correctly positioned. When the operator has confirmed that the needle is in the correct place, the injection will be given and the needle removed.

## What happens after the procedure?

After the procedure you will go into the recovery area or return to the ward where your blood pressure will be monitored.



## What pain might you experience after the procedure?

The amount of pain experienced might become worse for a short period of time. If this occurs, it is not dangerous and should settle over time. Hey radiofrequency ablation is usually more painful for the first week and then subsides in intensity every week after that. It may take 4-6 weeks for the full effect of the radiofrequency ablation to take place.

## Back at home

You can remove the dressing from the injection site after 24 hours.

## Will you be followed up afterwards?

You will be seen for follow up to determine how the ablation has helped you.

## Important information

Please let us know before if you have:

A cold/flu

Fever/chills

A persistent cough

You are taking a course of antibiotics prior to procedure

Or there has been any significant change in your overall health as this may affect your procedure.

**Failure to do so may result in your procedure being cancelled on the day.**

## Medication



Please take all your prescribed medication as normal prior to your procedure unless you have been otherwise advised

Please bring a list of all your current medication when you attend for your procedure

## Can I eat before I come in?

If you plan to get sedation for the procedure you should not eat from midnight the night before.

If you have any questions or concerns about this procedure call the office at 480-636-1225.

This handout should not be considered more important than your doctors advice when you spoke to him in the clinic. The information contained in this is generalized and may not pertain to your specific condition.