

Medial Branch Blocks (Cervical, Thoracic, Lumbar)

What is a medial branch block?

- A medial branch block is a procedure that involves injecting a small amount of local anesthetic/numbing medication near the medial branch nerves (small nerves near the facet joints of the spine that carry pain signals to the brain).
- This procedure can be done on the right side, left side, or both sides (bilateral). Your provider will determine what is best for you depending on your pain location.

Why would this injection be helpful?

- The injection aims to produce temporary pain relief by blocking pain signals. This will help confirm if this area is the source of pain.

Risks and side effects?

- Your provider will discuss risks with you at the time the procedure is ordered.
- Common short term side effects may occur including numbness, weakness, or increased pain.

What happens during the procedure?

- You must arrive 30 minutes prior to your scheduled appt. The nurses will ask you medical questions, have you sign your consent, and review your medications.
- Once in the procedure room, you will lay in a prone position (on your stomach). The procedure is done under x-ray guidance.
- The nurse will monitor your vital signs throughout the procedure.
- Your skin will be washed with an antiseptic soap.
- The provider will direct a small needle near the nerves with fluoroscopy (X-rays) and inject an anesthetic (numbing) medication at the desired level/levels.

What happens after the procedure?

- You will go to the recovery room for monitoring until discharge criteria is met.
- You must keep track of your pain relief.
 - This procedure is meant to provide TEMPORARY pain relief. Pain relief is expected to last the duration of the numbing medication, which is typically few hours.
- If the medial branch block provided adequate but temporary pain relief, it will likely be repeated in approximately 2-4 weeks to ensure the first injection wasn't a false-positive.
- If you have 2 successful medial branch blocks, your provider may discuss radiofrequency ablation treatment (RFA) with you. RFA treatment provides longer lasting pain relief (6-12 months on average). Two medial branch blocks must be completed in order to proceed with an RFA (per insurance requirements).
- Follow your discharge instructions.
- A nurse will call you the next business day after your procedure to check on you further, discuss your relief, and discuss further plan of care.