

## INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR PROCEDURE

### **CERVICAL FACET INJECTION**

#### **How we do the procedure**

A cervical facet block is done to treat inflammation of the facet joint which can cause neck and shoulder pain. The cervical facet joint is often involved in a whiplash injury or after neck surgery, particularly neck fusions that can cause increased stress on the joints. The block can be performed at any level of the neck.

You will be lying face down on the table with several pillows under your chest. Your neck will be cleansed with Betadine and a sterile drape will cover the area. After numbing the area with local anesthetic, a small needle is inserted alongside the spine and advanced to the position of the specific facet joint to be blocked, either by inserting the needle into the joint or by blocking the nerve that takes care of sensation from the joint. A small needle will be inserted into the joints under x-ray guidance using our fluoroscopy machine to ensure proper placement. Once in position, a local anesthetic agent is injected into the joint to numb the nerves in the joint. Occasionally, a long-acting steroid (NOT the kind that increases muscle size in athletes) is injected also.

#### **What to expect**

As soon as the doctor has completed your injection, the Nursing staff will be asking for your pain score. With the local anesthetic injection, it is possible that you may notice a numb area on your neck or shoulder. This injection is primarily diagnostic, to identify what area of the spine is causing your pain. The local anesthetic will wear off in approximately 3 hours, then your pain may return. If a steroid was injected, it will reach its peak in 1-5 days, and hopefully give you longer lasting relief. Depending on your response to the injection, we may repeat the facet block in 2 weeks. You may be a candidate for a facet rhizotomy or radiofrequency approach to cauterize the facet nerves. This new technique has a good chance of giving you long-term relief of your pain, from 6 months to 2 years.

If no substantial effects are obtained after one or two injections, we will discuss other alternatives.

#### **Risks**

The risks include bleeding, infection and a reaction to any of the medications used for the procedure. We use sterile technique to avoid infections. If you are taking a "blood thinner" (anticoagulant), we will give you special instructions before the procedure to avoid excess bleeding.

#### **Safety Precautions**

Since your ability to drive may be impaired for a few hours, we ask that you have someone drive you home.

Injected steroids occasionally cause nervousness, difficulty sleeping, a flushed feeling (like hot flashes), an increased appetite, an elevated blood sugar, or a "moon face" (rounded face) for several days. (Steroids are used occasionally for this procedure.)