



MEDIAL BRANCH BLOCK

OVERVIEW:

A minimally invasive procedure that aims to temporarily relieve back pain. It is commonly performed to confirm the diagnosis of facet joint disease. The effects are usually temporary, if successful then a procedure called Radiofrequency Ablation may be recommended.

WHAT IS A MEDIAL BRANCH NERVE?

Medial branch nerves are the small bundle of nerves that control sensation to part of the spine known as the facet joint. The facet joint is where each bone in the spine connects with the next. Similar to a knee or hip joint, when these joints develop arthritis they can be a source of pain.

WHAT IS A BRANCH BLOCK?

The procedure will take place here in our office in our procedure suite, and will last anywhere between 15 minutes to ½ hour. The patient will be positioned on their stomach. The skin on the back is cleaned with an antiseptic solution, and numbed with a local anesthetic. The nerve block is performed under X-ray guidance.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE PROCEDURE?

The procedure can be both therapeutic and diagnostic. One of two outcomes will occur:

1. The pain does not go away - This means the pain is not originating from the facet joint.
2. The pain goes away for a few hours to a couple days but then returns - Facet joint disease is the likely cause of pain.

Side effects are uncommon and minimal. The patient may experience pain or soreness at the injection site. More serious side effects include infection, bleeding, and nerve injury.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

If you received relief from the procedure, you may be a candidate for a Radiofrequency Ablation (also known as a rhizotomy). This is a procedure that can inactivate the nerves and relieve pain for up to a year.