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Your Guide to Medial Branch Blocks

What is a Medial Branch Block?

A Medial Branch Block is a two-step diagnostic procedure in which a small needle is inserted near your medial nerves that are located on your facet joints in the back or the neck. An anesthetic is then injected to temporarily block the pain signals coming from the medial nerves.

How can a Medial Branch Block help me?

A Medial Branch Block can be an effective nonsurgical diagnostic test to pinpoint the source of your pain. This helps your provider determine the best approach for your pain treatment. This type of injection most often helps pinpoint pain caused from joint degeneration and arthritis.

Will I have immediate relief after my Medial Branch Block?

Medial Branch Blocks typically have a fast-acting effect on your pain. However, the medication used for a medial branch block is short-term and its pain-relieving effects will wear off the same day. It is important to remember that this is a test to pinpoint your pain for further long-acting treatment options.

How do I prepare for my Medial Branch Block?

Ensure your doctor knows if:

You are taking Coumadin or any other blood thinners: *Plavix, Aspirin, Eliquis, Excedrin, fish oil, etc.*

You are taking steroids and or antibiotics.

You have liver or kidney disease: *chronic kidney disease, cirrhosis, etc.*

You have the following implantable devices: *medication pump, pacemaker, defibrillator, or stimulator.*

You have any allergies: *steroids, anesthetic, iodine, adhesive, contrast, shellfish.*

You have any questions regarding your medication.

You have had or are planning to have a vaccine within 2 weeks of your procedure.

****Please call to cancel your appointment if you have a fever, the flu, covid, or any other infection****

What can I do the day of my Medial Branch Block?

- You may eat and drink normally; there is no need to fast.
- Take your normal medication on the day of your test, unless otherwise instructed.
- We want to test the effects of the procedure on your pain tolerance.
Plan on returning to your normal activity following the procedure.
- You will need to shower with antibacterial soap the day before and the day of your procedure. Dial is an easy brand to grab if you are unsure of the soap to use.
- Do NOT apply lotions, creams, gels, or ointments on the day of your procedure.
- Wear loose fitting clothing including elastic waistband pants/shorts and a loose-fitting shirt.
- **Bring someone with you who can remain on campus to drive you home.**
(The length of the procedure itself is approximately 20 minutes).

What can I expect during the procedure?

You will need to be able to get yourself up onto the procedure table and position yourself on your stomach.

You will remain on your stomach for the entire length of the procedure.

The area of your injection will be cleansed with an antiseptic solution.

Your skin will be numbed with a local anesthetic.

Then the physician will use fluoroscopy (x-ray) to guide the placement of the needle near your medial branch nerves.

You may feel some pressure in the area of your injection. The physician will inject the medication slowly in order to decrease your discomfort.

Once the medication is injected, the needle is removed, the area will be cleaned off, a band aid will be applied, and the procedure is complete.

What happens after my Medical Branch Block?

- You will spend about 10 minutes in the recovery room reviewing post-procedure instructions with the nurse prior to discharging. You may require a longer stay in recovery if additional monitoring is necessary.
- You will receive a pain diary after your procedure. **This will need to be filled out by you and you will need to call Neuroscience Group one business day after your procedure to update us on the pain numbers you logged. Please do not lose or misplace your diary.**
- You may experience warmth, numbness, tingling, heaviness, or weakness to the area for up to 8 hours after your procedure.
- You can shower after your procedure. However, NO SOAKING in tub, hot tub, pool, etc. for 24 hours.
- **You will need to perform non-strenuous activities that normally cause you pain.**

**Questions about your Medial Branch Block procedure?
Call Heather, our Physiatry Nurse Navigator, 920-725-9373**