

# LUMBAR FACET INJECTION

## For Low Back & Leg Pain

A lumbar facet injection is an outpatient procedure for diagnosing and treating low back, buttock, hip and groin pain. This information sheet will explain what it is; your doctor can explain if it is for you.

### What are lumbar facet joints?

Facet joints connect the vertebrae, the bones in the spine. They help guide your spine when you move. The low back area of your spine is called the lumbar region and it contains five vertebrae. Facet joints are found on both sides of the spine. Each is about the size of a thumbnail. Lumbar facet joints are named for the vertebrae they connect and the side of the spine where they are located. The right L4-5 facet joint, for example, would join the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> lumbar vertebrae on the right side.

### What is lumbar facet joint pain?

You may feel pain if a lumbar facet joint is injured. Sometimes it feels like muscle tension, other times like severe pain. The cartilage inside the joint may be injured, other times the connecting ligaments are injured. Facet pain also depends on which joint is affected. Lumbar facet joint pain can occur from your low back down to your buttocks, groin and hips.

### How do I know if I have lumbar facet pain?

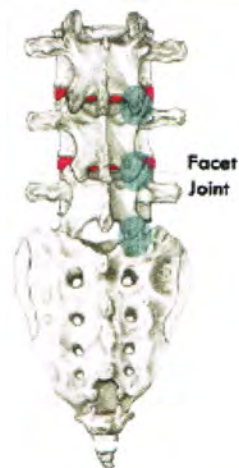
If you have pain in your low back for more than two months, you may have lumbar facet joint pain. Common tests such as MRI's may not always show if a facet joint is causing pain.

### What is a lumbar facet injection?

In a lumbar facet injection, a corticosteroid (anti-inflammatory medicine) is injected into one or more of the lumbar facets. A local anesthetic (numbing medicine) may also be injected. The injection can be used to diagnose or treat.

### What happens during an injection?

A local anesthetic will be used to numb your skin. The doctor will then insert a thin needle directly into the facet joint. X-ray will be used to ensure the safe and proper position of the needle. X-ray dye also may be injected to make sure the needle is in the correct spot. Once the doctor is sure the needle is correctly placed, the medicine will be injected.



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## What happens after an injection?

You will be monitored for up to 60 minutes after the injection. When you are ready to leave, the staff will give you discharge instructions. It may help to move in ways that hurt before the injection, to see if the pain is still there, but do not overdo it. Take it easy for the rest of the day. You may feel immediate pain relief and numbness in your back or leg for a period of time after the injection, this may indicate the medicine has reached the correct spot. Your pain may return after this short pain-free period, or may be a little worse for a day or two. Corticosteroids usually take two or three days to start working, but can take as long as a week. You can usually return to work the day after the injection, but always check with your doctor.

## How long can I expect pain relief?

The extent and duration of pain relief may depend on the amount of inflammation and how many areas are involved. Sometimes other coexisting factors may be responsible for the pain. An injection may bring several weeks to months of pain relief, and then further treatment may be needed. Other times a single injection brings long term pain relief.



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