

#### **What are cervical facet joints?**

Facet joints are found on both sides of the spine. Each is about the size of a thumbnail. Cervical facet joints are named for the vertebrae they connect and the side of the spine where they are found. The right C3-4 facet joint, for example, joins the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> vertebrae on the right side. Facet joints not only connect the vertebrae, but they also guide the spine during movement.

#### **What is cervical facet joint pain?**

Cervical facet joint pain is the result of joint dysfunction, either due to injury or irritation. Pain from an irritated cervical facet joint may range from simple muscle tension to more severe pain. Depending on which facet joint is affected, the pain may occur in an area from the head down to the shoulder blades.

#### **How do I know if I have cervical facet pain?**

If you have pain in one or more of these areas when you turn your head, and it has lasted longer than a few months, you may have cervical facet pain.

#### **What is a cervical facet injection?**

During this procedure, an anesthetic and a steroid are injected into one or more of the cervical facet joints. The injection can be used to diagnose and/or treat. If the injection temporarily lessens your pain and helps you move your neck better, then your doctor will know which facet joint is causing the pain. A steroid is used to treat inflammation inside the facet joint.

#### **What happens during an injection?**

The procedure may or may not be done with intravenous sedation to help you relax. If you are very anxious, you may want to request sedation by talking to your doctor **prior** to the day of the procedure. Sedation will require that you fast for four hours prior to the procedure. If you will not be having sedation, we recommend that you eat a normal meal prior to the procedure. A local anesthetic will be used to numb the skin. The doctor will then insert a thin needle directly into the facet joint. If at any point in time the procedure becomes painful, you should let the doctor know as he can use more anesthetic to numb the painful area. Fluoroscopy, a type of x-ray, will be used to ensure the safe and proper position of the needle. A dye will also be injected to make sure the medicine will go into the correct spot. Once the needle is in the correct location, an anesthetic and a steroid will be injected.

#### **What happens after an injection?**

You will be monitored for approximately 30 minutes after the procedure. Before you leave the clinic, you will be given discharge instructions. Please keep track of your pain as this will help your doctor determine the next step in treatment. It is normal to feel better immediately after the procedure. This is the effect of the anesthetic. It will most likely wear off a few hours after the procedure. This is normal. It may be caused by the needle irritation or by the steroid itself. Steroids normally take two to three days to begin working but can take as long as one week. You should be able to return to work the day after the procedure.

#### **How long can I expect pain relief?**

Depending on the number of irritated joints and the amount of inflammation, an injection can offer several months of pain relief. If there is no underlying bone or joint problem, one injection could bring long-term pain relief. If your pain is caused by irritation of more than one area, only some of your symptoms may be helped by one injection.

#### **Questions**

The CORE Institute is dedicated to your outcome. If any questions or concerns arise, please call The CORE Institute at 1.866.974.2673.