



Information for
patients and
carers

**Diagnostic Medial Branch Block
(Facet Joint Injections)**

Pain Management Services

What is a diagnostic Medial Branch Block (MBB)?

The majority of vertebrae in your back are connected to one another by large discs and by facets, these facets form a joint. Like most other joints in your body they are designed to move (articulate) in a specific way. They are very stable and quite strong joints. Some people can develop pain in their back or neck due to aches, sprains, stresses, arthritis or damage to these joints. This may at times spread to the thighs/groin (back) or arms (neck). It is possible to inject local anaesthetic and sometimes steroid close to the nerves supplying these joints to try and obtain pain relief. This is very similar to injections used for painful knees and tennis elbow. Pain relief gained may allow you to increase your daily activities, and your ability to undergo physiotherapy to strengthen your back. It may help you to reduce the amount of medication you take for your pain.

How is the diagnostic MBB (facet joint injection) done?

The exact location of each facet joint cannot always be determined by clinical examination. Because of this these injections are usually performed using x-ray imaging (screening) and are undertaken in the theatre procedure room. When you arrive at the hospital report to the theatre patient reception where you will wait until the Doctor is ready for you. The procedure is done under local anaesthetic, lying on your front, your back is cleaned with antiseptic and the locations for injections are identified using the x-ray machine. The skin is numbed with local anaesthetic. Once this has taken effect the nerves supplying the facet joints are injected with the local anaesthetic and steroid (if this is being used), again using the x-ray machine for guidance. Sometimes several levels may be injected at any one time. Following the procedure you will be given a drink and once you feel ready, you can go home.

What happens next?

The amount of pain relief gained varies between individuals and even in the same person at different times. Unfortunately, some people do not get any benefit from these injections. The duration of effect is also variable - some people only get a few weeks benefit, whilst others may get many months relief. However it is important to remember that any relief gained from the injections will be increased if you are more active during this period. If the diagnostic MBB is successful and provides you with good pain relief within the first few hours of the procedure, the pain team may ask you if you wish to be considered for a radio frequency ablation. (You can ask for further information on this).

Do I need to avoid anything?

You do **not** need to fast prior to this procedure. Have a light breakfast unless you have been told specifically by your doctor otherwise. **Do not drive, operate machinery or do any other activities that require your full undivided attention on the day of the procedure.** Someone should bring you to and from hospital. Do not make any important decisions on the day of the injections.

Otherwise you can carry out your normal activities.

Potential side effects

You may experience some of the following:

- Mild local tenderness and/or bruising at the site of injection. This usually settles over the first few days, but sometimes people experience back pain for longer
- Blood pressure may be low after local anaesthetic injection. The nurse will check regularly before you go home, with extra care after you first stand up and walk after the procedure
- The local anaesthetic may rarely spread causing some

numbness and weakness in your legs and other areas. Should this occur, the effect is temporary and will rapidly resolve over minutes or rarely hours

- Infection is rare. You should seek medical advice if there is a local warmth or redness over the site of injection with tenderness or you feel hot or unwell. This may require antibiotic treatment
- Inadvertent intravascular injection of local anaesthetic is very rare and may lead to collapse and require medical treatment
- Injection treatments are not always effective and may not help your pain

Is there anything else I need to consider before the procedure?

- Please bring your glasses if you need them for reading
- Always bring a list of all current medication
- Continue to take your medication as usual on the treatment day

Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact Pain Management Service on **01772 524185**.

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.patient.co.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

www.painconcern.org.uk

www.retrainpain.org

www.fpm.ac.uk

All our patient information leaflets are available on our website for patients to access and download:

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets

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If you want to stop smoking, you can also contact the Quit Squad Freephone 0800 328 6297.

Please ask if you would like help in understanding this information. This information can be made available in large print and in other languages.

Gujarati:

આ માહિતીને સમજવામાં સહાયતા જોઈતી હોય તો કૃપા કરીને પૂછો. આ માહિતી મોટા છપાણામાં અને અન્ય ભાષામાં ઉપલબ્ધ કરી શકાય છે.

Romanian:

Vă rugăm să întrebați dacă aveți nevoie de ajutor pentru înțelegerea acestor informații. Aceste informații pot fi puse la dispoziție în format mare și în alte limbi.”

Polish:

Poinformuj nas, jeśli potrzebna jest ci pomoc w zrozumieniu tych informacji. Informacje te można również udostępnić dużym drukiem oraz w innych językach

Punjabi:

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਸਮਝਣ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਮਦਦ ਲੈਣੀ ਚਾਹੋਗੇ ਤਾਂ ਕਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਪੁੱਛੋ। ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਵੱਡੇ ਪ੍ਰਿੰਟ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਮੁਹੱਈਆ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ।

Urdu:

دو سر ی زبانوں او ر بڑی اگر آپ کو ہی معلومات سمجھنے کے لئے مدد کی ضرورت ہے تو ییچھیا جس ییہ ابی دست بو یسکت ہے براے مہر یبان پوے یچھدی. معلومات

Arabic:

مطبوعة بأحرف كبيرة وبلغات إذا كنت تريد مساعدة في فهم هذه لمعلومات يُرجى أن تطلب أخرى يمكن توفير هذه المعلومات

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