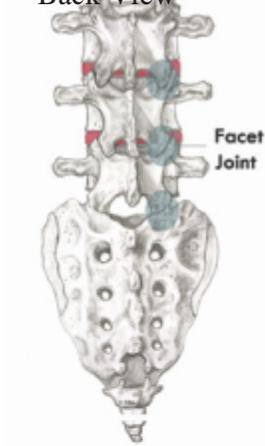


LUMBAR FACET INJECTION

Back View



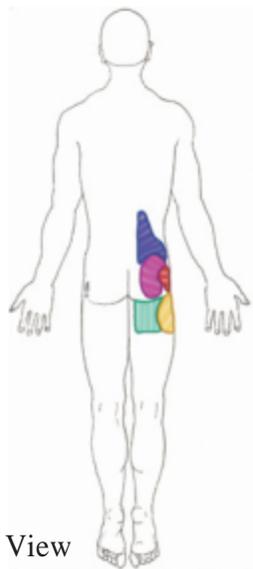
For Low Back Pain

A lumbar facet injection is an outpatient procedure for 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 of the spine. They help guide your spine when you move. The low back area of the spine is called the lumbar region. 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 found. The right L4-5 facet joint, for example, joins the 4th and 5th lumbar vertebrae on the right side.



What is lumbar facet joint pain?

You may feel pain if a lumbar facet joint is injured or inflamed. Sometimes it feels like simple muscle tension. Other times it can be severe pain.

The cartilage inside the joint may be injured. Other times only connecting ligaments or nerves surrounding the joint are injured.

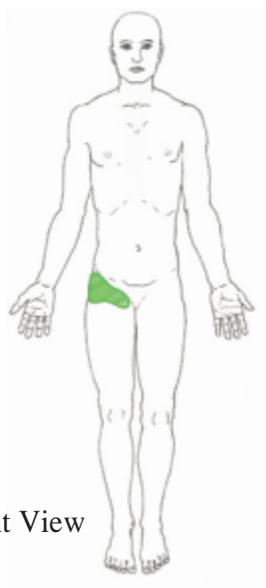
Facet pain also depends on which joint is affected. Lumbar facet joint pain can occur in an area from your low back down to your buttocks and groin. The diagram shows areas of pain that are *usually* associated with lumbar facet joint injuries.

How do I know if I have lumbar facet pain?

If you have pain in one or more of these areas that worsen when you move your back, you may have lumbar facet pain. Common tests such as x-rays or MRIs may not always show if a facet joint is causing pain.

Back View

Based on: Fabal S, O'Brien G, Reinsel M, Olson G, Kromann H, Hagenborn V. Distribution of referred pain from the lumbar zygapophysial joints and its treatment. *The Clinical Journal of Pain*. 1997; 13: 203-207.



Front View

What is a lumbar facet injection?

In a lumbar facet injection, an anesthetic and corticosteroid are injected into one or more of your lumbar facet joints.

The injection can be used to diagnose and/or treat. A local anesthetic (numbing medicine) and corticosteroid (healing medicine) may be injected to see if they temporarily lessen your pain. If they do, and if this helps you move better, it tells the doctor which facet joint is causing the pain. The corticosteroid is used to treat inflammation of the facet joint.

What happens during an injection?

The injection may start with an IV (medicine given intravenously) to help you relax. A local anesthetic (numbing medicine) will be used to numb your skin.

The doctor will then insert a thin needle directly into the facet joint. Fluoroscopy, a type of x-ray, may be used to ensure the safe and proper position of the needle. A dye may also be injected to make sure the needle is at the correct spot.

For Low Back Pain

Once the doctor is sure the needle is correctly placed, the local anesthetic and corticosteroid will be injected.

What happens after an injection?

You will be monitored for at least 30 minutes after the injection. When you are ready to leave, the clinic 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 for up to six hours after the injection. Your pain may return after this short pain-free period, or may even be a little worse for a day or two. This is normal. It may be caused by needle irritation or by the corticosteroid itself. Corticosteroids usually take one or two days to start working, but can take as long as a week. Pain relief will follow this period.

You can usually return to work the day after the injection, but always check with your doctor.

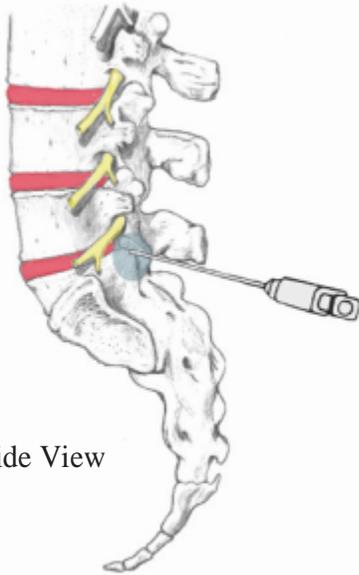
How long can I expect pain relief?

How long you can expect pain relief depends on how many areas are injured, and on the amount of inflammation. If your pain goes away for a short time, but then returns, you may be a candidate for radiofrequency denervation (RFD) to the medial branch nerve. This procedure provides a more permanent disruption of pain signals.

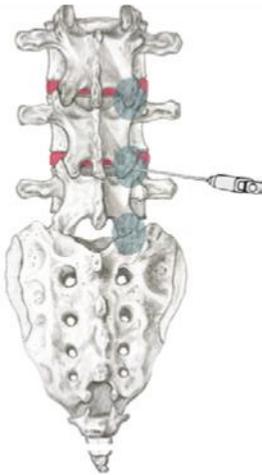
Sometimes an injection or series of injections can bring several months of pain relief, and then more treatment is needed.

Other times, particularly if there is no underlying bone or joint problem, these injections bring long-term pain relief. If your pain is caused by injury to more than one area, only some of your symptoms may be helped by these injections.

This pamphlet is for general education only. Specific questions or concerns should always be directed to your doctor. Your doctor can explain possible risks or side effects.



Side View



Back View