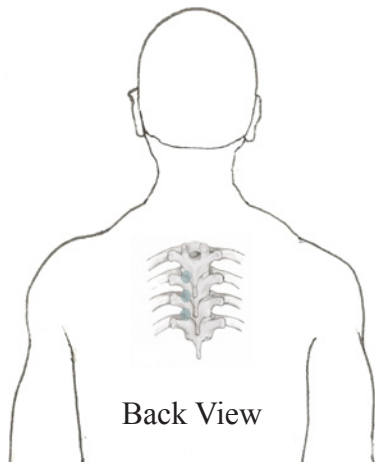


THORACIC FACET INJECTION

For Upper & Mid Back Pain



A thoracic facet injection is an outpatient procedure for treating upper and middle back pain. This information sheet will explain what it is. Your doctor can explain if it is for you.

What are thoracic facet joints?

Facet joints connect the vertebrae, the bones of the spine. They help guide your spine when you move. The section of your spine between your neck and low back is called the thoracic region. It contains twelve vertebrae.

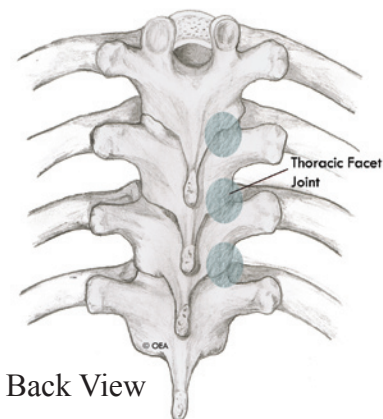
Facet joints are found on both sides of the spine. Each is about the size of a thumbnail. Thoracic facet joints are named for the vertebrae they connect and the side of the spine where they are found. The right T4-5 facet joint, for example, joins the 4th and 5th thoracic vertebrae on the right side.

What is thoracic facet joint pain?

You may feel pain if a thoracic 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 facet joint is affected. Thoracic facet joint pain occurs from your upper back and shoulder down to your hips. The diagram shows areas of pain *usually* associated with specific thoracic facet joints.



How do I know if I have thoracic facet pain?

If you have pain in one or more of these areas you may have thoracic facet pain. Common tests such as x-rays or MRIs may not show if a facet joint is causing pain.

What is a thoracic facet injection?

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

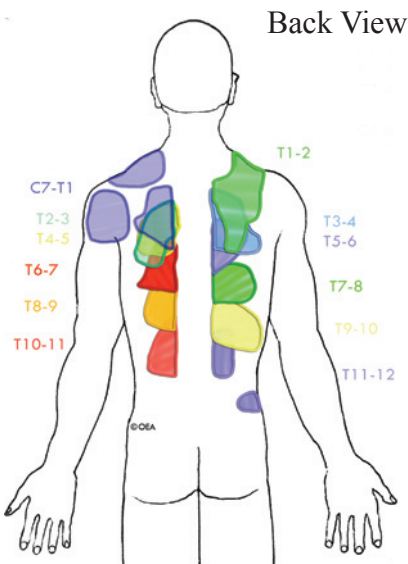
The injection can be used to diagnose and/or treat. A local anesthetic (numbing medicine) and corticosteroid (healing medicine) are injected to see if they temporarily lessen your pain. If they do, and if this helps you move better, it tells the doctor which facet joint is causing the pain. The corticosteroid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

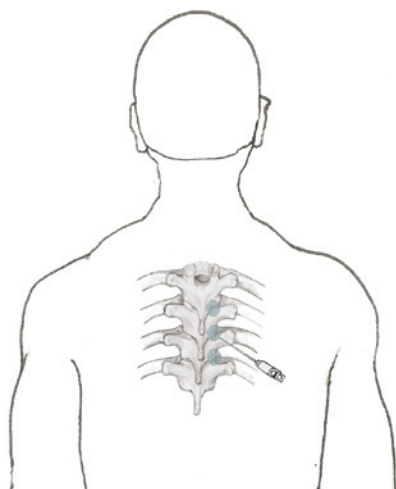
The doctor will then insert a thin needle directly into the facet joint. Fluoroscopy, a type of x-ray, may be used to ensure the safe and proper position of the needle. A dye may also be injected to make sure the needle is at the correct spot.

When the doctor is sure the needle is at the correct place, the anesthetic and corticosteroid will be injected.



Based on: Dreyfuss P, Tibiletti C, Dreyer S. Thoracic Zygapophysial Joint Pain Patterns. Spine. 1994; 19(7):807-811.

For Upper & Mid Back Pain



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. Keeping track of your pain helps your doctor know what the next steps are for your care.

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 upper 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.

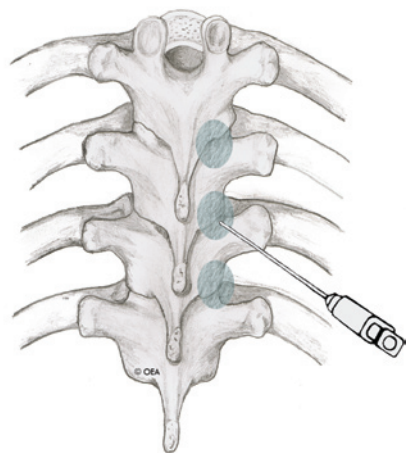
How long can I expect pain relief?

How long you can expect pain relief depends on how many areas are injured, and on the amount of inflammation.

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

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.





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