



BRANCH BLOCKS

MEDIAL BRANCH BLOCKS

Medial branch blocks are injections that are used to determine whether a patient's chronic pain stems from the medial nerves surrounding one of the facet joints of the spine. These tiny nerves are responsible for the sensations felt in the joints including pain.

By temporarily anesthetizing the medial branch nerves, an assessment can be made concerning whether those nerves are responsible for the pain a patient has been experiencing. If patients experience pain relief following a medial branch block injection, doctors can make a definitive diagnosis and begin exploring options for treatment such as a neurotomy, which can provide long-term pain relief that lasts up to a year or more. If patients do not experience any pain relief following the procedure, the medial nerves at the site of the injection are not the source of the pain.

Medial branch blocks are administered using a very fine needle. Patients are usually awake for the procedure but will feel minimal discomfort due to the use of a local anesthetic. Because the medial branch nerves are very small, the injection is guided by live imaging fluoroscopy. A small amount of numbing agent is applied to the affected area in a procedure that typically takes less than a half hour to complete. The recovery process is minimal, and most patients can return to normal activity within 24 hours.

EPIDURAL/SELECTIVE SPINAL NERVE BLOCKS

Both epidurals and selective spinal nerve blocks may be used to manage pain or make an accurate diagnosis of nerves and discs.

A selective spinal nerve block, which may also be referred to as a selective nerve root block (SNRB), is an injection of anti-inflammatory or numbing medication directly into a specific nerve. Prior to the injection, a local anesthetic is used to numb the skin to reduce discomfort during the procedure. A needle is then carefully guided to the selected nerve root where the medication is to be administered.

An epidural injection uses a thin needle to penetrate the membrane that cushions the outside of the spinal cord. Like SNRB injections, epidurals are usually delivered with a local anesthetic for palliative purposes during the procedure. Epidural injections are often used to treat pain and irritation that results from spinal stenosis, which is a narrowing of the canal in which the nerves travel through the spine. Following a therapeutic epidural injections, patients may experience significant pain relief in as little as one day.