

Facet denervation



What are facet joints?

The facet joints are small joints that connect the bones in your back (the vertebrae). These joints can get worn and inflamed, causing pain.

Why do I need facet denervation?

To ease your back pain. You will probably already have received injections into your facet joints. These provide good but temporary pain relief.

Your doctor would now like to perform a longer lasting procedure called radiofrequency facet denervation.

What is radiofrequency facet denervation?

An electrical current is used to destroy the tiny sensory nerves that supply the facet joints. This may produce longer lasting pain relief.

Where will I have the procedure?

The procedure is performed as a day case. It is not necessary to fast prior to the procedure unless specified by your doctor.

Do I need to do anything before the procedure?

As we use X-rays during this procedure, tell the doctor before you have the X-ray if you think you may be pregnant.

You need to arrange for someone to drive you home afterwards.

What happens during the procedure?

1. You need to lie face down on a trolley.
2. A plate that conducts and completes the electrical circuit is placed on your thigh.
3. Local anaesthetic is applied.
4. The doctor then places a special needle near the facet joint under X-ray control.
5. A series of electrical tests are performed to ensure that the needle is in the correct position.

6. When the needle is positioned correctly, an electrode is placed through the needle and a radiofrequency current is produced to heat the nerve.
7. The needle is then removed.
8. This process may be repeated at different levels and sides of the facet joints, as appropriate to you.

The procedure may take up to an hour, depending on how many sites are being treated.

Will it hurt?

You need to be awake and co-operative for the procedure. Therefore, local anaesthetic is used to ease any discomfort. If you are very nervous, your doctor may agree to give you a small amount of sedation.

What happens afterwards?

A small dressing is applied to your back, which can be removed after 24 hours. You can be taken home after 1-2 hours.

Will I have any pain?

You may feel an increase in pain for the first 1-2 weeks, together with tenderness of the surrounding area. Your pain should ease after that time.

Are there any risks or complications?

- There is a chance that your pain could be worse after your treatment, and there is no guarantee that it will be reduced.
- You may also have some bruising.
- Very rarely, some permanent damage to neighbouring nerves can occur. This can lead to pain, numbness or weakness, typically in the leg. This pain usually improves over several weeks.

Will I need another appointment?

A follow up appointment will be arranged for approximately 2-3 months after the procedure.

If you have any questions please ask the staff in the Pain Clinic or telephone 01872 252095.

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