

Medial Branch Block

This diagnostic procedure is performed to determine if a specific facet joint is the source of a patient's pain. During the procedure, an injection is used to block the nerves serving the painful facet joints.

STEP 1

Patients lie either on their side or stomach on a table equipped with a special x-ray (fluoroscopic) unit, and an intravenous (IV) line is started to administer medication that relaxes the patient. A local anesthetic numbs the skin and all the tissue down to the medial branch.

STEP 2

The physician slides a needle through the anesthetized track. A contrast solution is injected so the physician can use an x-ray (fluoroscope) to see the painful areas and to confirm the correct location of the needle tip.

STEP 3

Next, anesthetic medicine is injected around the nerves to block pain signals from reaching the brain.

STEP 4

If there is no significant relief, another level may be treated to see if that is the source of pain. If the pain improves soon after the procedure, an injection providing more long-term relief or radiofrequency lesioning could be performed at that level.

