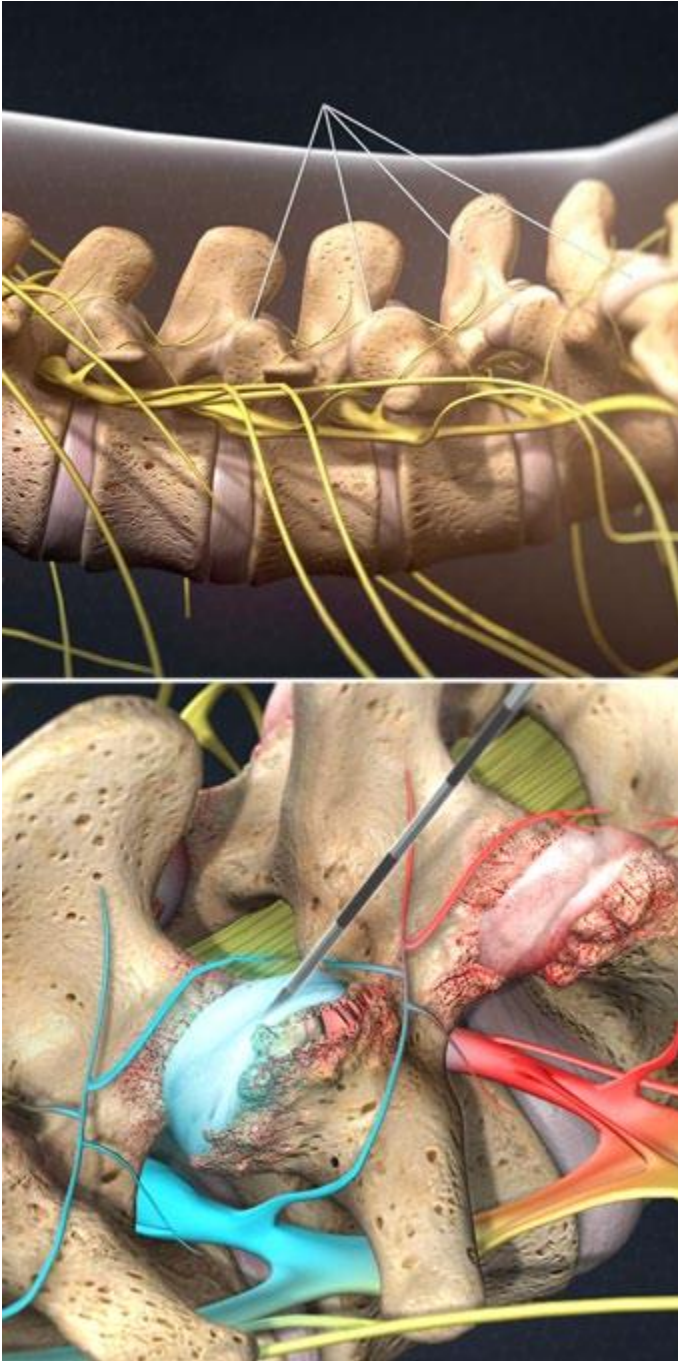


FACET JOINT INJECTIONS



Overview

The facet joints, found on both sides of the back of the spine, can become painfully irritated or inflamed. A facet joint injection may help diagnose the source of a patient's pain. It can also relieve pain and inflammation.

Skin Numbed

In preparation for the procedure, the physician numbs the skin and tissue above the facet joint with an injection of local anesthetic.

Placement Confirmed

With the aid of an x-ray device called a fluoroscope, the physician guides a needle through the numbed tissue and into the facet joint. Contrast dye is injected into the joint to confirm the needle's placement.

Medication Injected

Once the needle is positioned properly, the physician injects a soothing mixture of numbing anesthetic and anti-inflammatory steroid medication. One or more facet joints may be treated. If this causes the pain to subside, it suggests that the facet joint (or joints) injected were the cause of pain.

End of Procedure

Back or neck pain may disappear immediately after a successful injection because of the anesthetic that is administered. As this anesthetic wears off, pain may return. The steroid will begin to take effect in the days after the injection. The steroid will reduce inflammation and pain. The injection can provide relief for a span ranging from several days to several months. Up to three injections may be given per year.