Cervical Medial Branch Block

What Is A Cervical Medial Branch Block and How Can It Help Me?

Your neck pain could be coming from the facet joints in your cervical spine. These small bony protrusions from your vertebra that meet with the vertebra above are supplied by the medial branch nerves of your spine, which are responsible for sending pain signals to your brain but do not control movement or function.

Once inflamed, your facet joints can irritate these nerves and set off a constant pain cascade. This can cause achiness in your neck, radiating pain that sweeps across your neck and shoulders, and symptoms that worsen every time you turn your head from side to side or look up.

In a cervical medial branch block, your pain intervention specialist will deliver a long-acting local anesthetic to these medial branch nerves that supply your facets.

The purpose of the procedure is to determine whether your neck and shoulder pain is due to your facet joints based on whether the anesthetic provides relief from your pain, and how long this relief lasts.

If you do experience a lasting lessening of your pain, the block may be repeated.

What Can I Expect During the Procedure?

If you select to undergo sedation, an IV will be started. This allows you to receive medications to relax you and keep you comfortable.

During the procedure, your doctor will have you lie on your side and the skin of your neck will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution. Your pain physician will then use x-ray guidance to place very small needle along the bony landmarks that mark the location of your medial branch nerves and inject anesthetic along each nerve.

What Happens After the Procedure?

After your cervical medial branch block, you can expect to be transferred to a recovery area where you will rest and be monitored for a short time, usually about 30 minutes. If you choose to be sedated, it is important that you have someone to drive you home.

Although you can take a shower, you should not soak the area in a bath for 48 hours. It’s also important to avoid strenuous activity for the rest of the day.