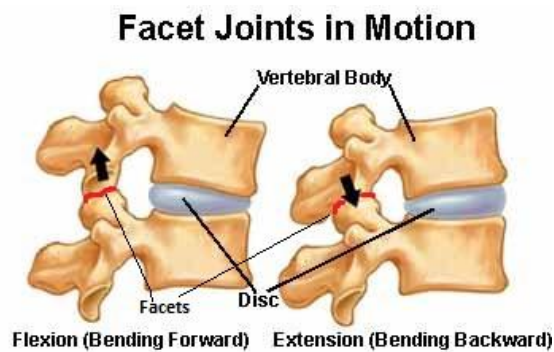


Thoracic Medial Branch Block (MBB)

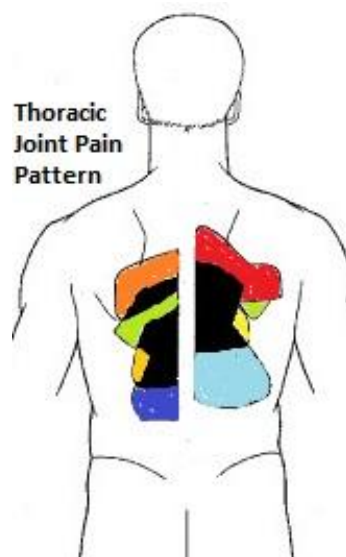
What is a facet joint pain?

The spine is made of vertebrae, which makes up the spine. The vertebrae are connected to each other with facet joints, which allows the bending and rotational spine movements. As the joints become inflamed and irritated, there is a small medial branch nerve that transmits the pain signal from the joint to the brain. Furthermore, spine pain may worsen during the extension of spine.



What are the indications of thoracic medial branch block?

Among many indications the listed are the main indications: spondylosis, spondylolisthesis, arthritis, osteoarthritis, spondyloarthritis, back fusion, mid-back pain, failed back surgery syndrome.



How does thoracic medial branch block bring pain relief?

The pain is produced due to inflammation thoracic facet joint which is transmitted via medial branch nerve to the central nervous system. By injection local anesthetic which helps numbs out the medial branch nerve, this results in decreased mid-back pain caused by the facet joints.

What are risks for the thoracic medial branch block?

Among many, here are few listed: increased pain, infection, bleeding, nerve damage, weakness, numbness.

How is the thoracic medial branch block performed?

After sterile preparation of the thoracic region, the injection site is localized under X-ray. Following the local anesthetic applied to the injection site, which can help decrease the injection site pain, the needle is guided toward the target thoracic facet joint area with the help of X-ray. After the target is reached, it can be further confirmed with liquid contrast. Thereafter, small amount of local anesthetic is injected, and the needle is taken out at the end of the procedure.

What to expect after the procedure?

This is an **outpatient procedure**. Patient should expect to receive instant 50-60% relief in 5-10 minutes from the nerve block.

How long the relief from the thoracic MBB would last for?

It varies from patient to patient. Usually, the pain relief can last for few hours to few months.

What is the purpose of the thoracic medial branch block?

Thoracic MBB is a diagnostic procedure **NOT** therapeutic procedure. It helps confirm the pain arising from the thoracic joints. If patient receives > 50-60% relief from two separate thoracic medial branch block, then patient may be an excellent candidate for thoracic radiofrequency ablation of the medial branch nerves which can bring 6-12 months of pain relief. Please read the thoracic radiofrequency handout for more details.

Please tell your pain physician if you are taking any blood thinners. For example: Coumadin, Plavix, Heparin, Lovenox and etc. The blood thinners need to be stopped before the interventional procedure, and the time frame will be prescribed by your pain physician