

Understanding Your Diagnosis

Facet Joint Syndrome arises from inflammation or arthritis in the spinal facet joints, leading to localized back or neck pain that intensifies with backward leaning or twisting. The condition is linked to small nerves called medial branches, and blocking their signals can help identify if the facet joints are the pain source.

The Treatment: Medial Branch Blocks (MBB)

An MBB is a minimally invasive diagnostic procedure involving a local anesthetic injection near medial branch nerves to confirm if facet joints are the source of symptoms. Temporary relief indicates a confirmed diagnosis, potentially qualifying for longer-term treatments like Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA).

Note: Two sets of blocks are required for ablation eligibility.

Our Approach: Targetted Therapy

At Abilene Pain, we prioritize an independent and patient-centric approach to diagnosis. Unlike broad treatments, a Medial Branch Block is a highly specific "map" of your pain. Under the direction of Dr. Pugh, we utilize Live X-Ray (Fluoroscopy) to ensure the anesthetic is placed exactly on the nerve. This precision is vital for an accurate diagnosis, ensuring that your future treatment plan is based on clear evidence rather than guesswork.

Procedure Day Highlights:

- Performed under **Live X-Ray (Fluoroscopy)** for maximum precision.
- We use local numbing medication to ensure a comfortable experience.
- The entire procedure typically lasts about 15 minutes.
- You will be asked to track your pain levels in a "pain diary" immediately following the procedure.

Benefits

- **Confirms the Source:** Accurately identifies if facet joints are the cause of your pain.
- **Minimally Invasive:** No surgery or recovery
- **Evidence-Based:** Provides the data needed to move forward with long-term relief options.

Recovery

- Return to regular activity the same day.
- Since this is a diagnostic test, the relief is temporary (usually lasting **4 to 24 hours**).
- **Your Input is Key:** A follow-up is essential to determine if you are a candidate for more permanent relief.

Nicolas Pugh, MD | **Adrianne Anders, NP** | **Ted Chaka, PA**

Abilene Pain Locations

Main: 1925 Hospital Drive

Chaka: 6819 Memorial Dr. Ste B

Contact Numbers

Main: 325-326-3433

Chaka: 325-468-8096

Online

Email: info@abilenepain.com

Web: www.abilenepain.com



Medial Branch Nerve Blocks

DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS

Procedure Summary: Medial Branch Block

You have undergone a Medial Branch Block, a diagnostic procedure designed to determine if the facet joints in your spine are the primary source of your back or neck pain. We have delivered a local anesthetic (and sometimes a steroid) to the tiny nerves—the medial branches—that carry pain signals from these joints. This "diagnostic test" helps us confirm if you are a candidate for more durable treatments, such as Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA).

Activity Restrictions

- **Driving:** No driving for 24 hours if you had IV sedation.
- **Lifting:** As tolerated
- **Exercise:** As Tolerated

Wound Care

- **First 24 Hours:** Leave dressings intact
- **Showering:** Okay to shower
- **Submersion:** Permitted after 24 hours

Pain Management Expectations

- **The Diagnostic Window:** The local anesthetic works quickly. It is critical that you monitor your pain levels over the next 6 to 12 hours while the medication is active.
- **Pain Diary:** Please record the percentage of pain relief you experience during this window. This data is essential for determining your long-term treatment plan.
- **The Flare:** You may feel localized soreness once the anesthetic wears off. Use ice packs (20 min on/off) and resume baseline medications including NSAIDs/Aspirin immediately.

Red Flags

- New or worsening leg weakness, numbness, or "**foot drop**."
- Sudden loss of bowel or bladder control.
- **Fever** >101.5°F, chills, or **drainage at the incision site**.
- **Severe headache** that worsens when sitting or standing.

Follow-Up Schedule

- **1 week:** Formal functional assessment of procedural efficacy.

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