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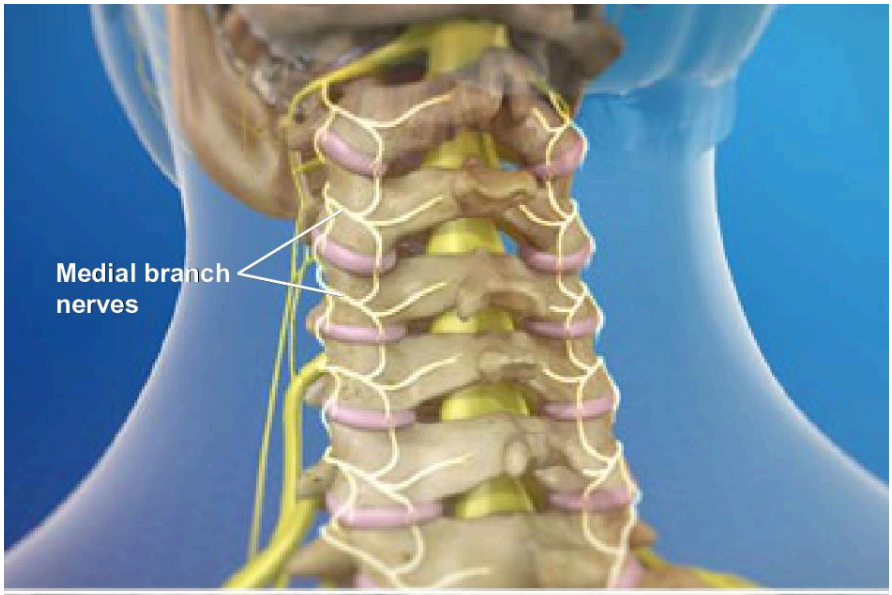
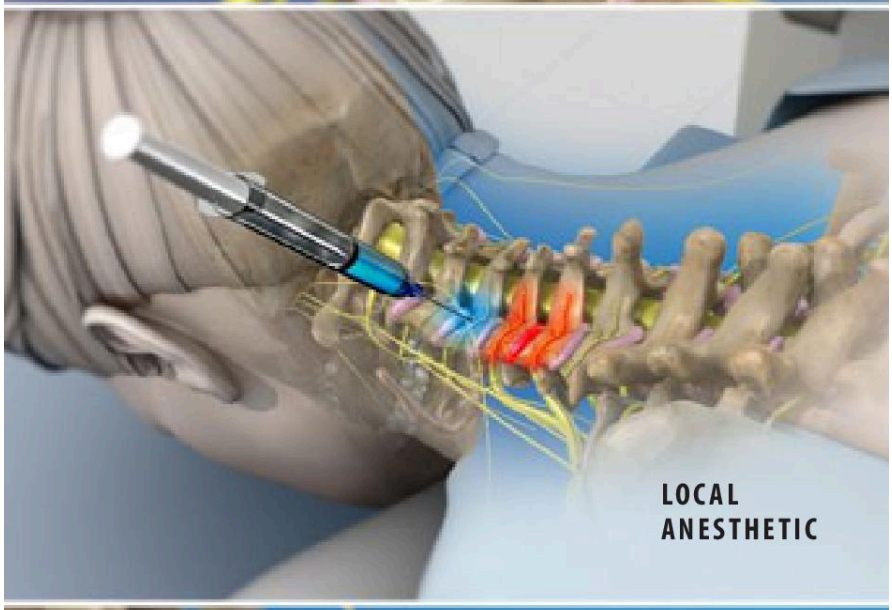
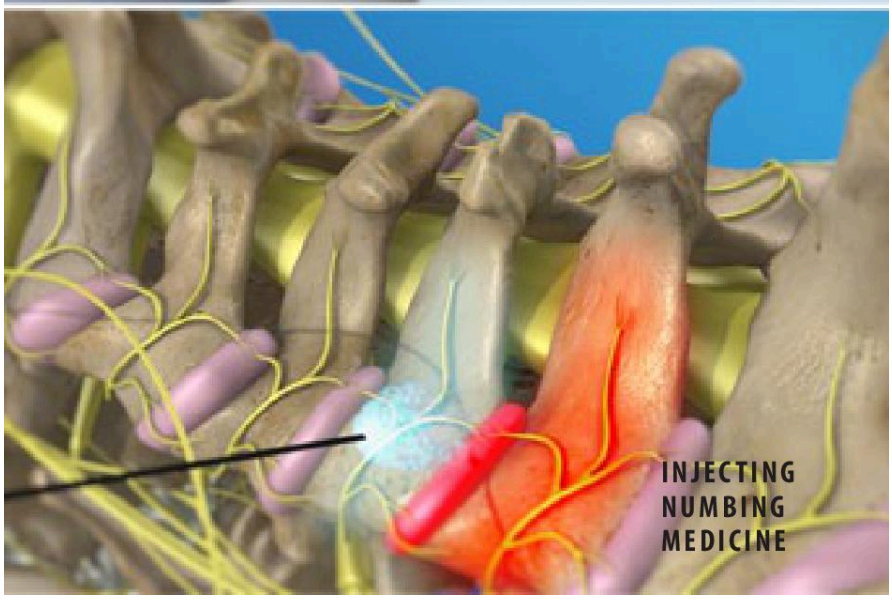
Medial Branch Block (Cervical)







Overview

This is an injection of numbing medicine that bathes the medial branch nerves. These nerves are attached to the facet joints of the spine. Disease or injury of these joints can cause pain in the medial branch nerves. This pain may travel through the neck, shoulders, upper back and head. A medial branch block can help your physician find the source of your pain. It may also provide temporary pain relief.

Preparation

In preparation for the procedure, the physician injects local anesthetic. This numbs the skin and tissue around the level or levels that will be injected.

Inserting the Needle

Next, the physician pushes a thin needle through the numbed tissue. The physician uses an x-ray device called a fluoroscope to see the needle in your body. The needle is carefully guided toward the medial branch nerves. Contrast dye is injected through the needle to confirm that it is positioned correctly.

Injection

When the needle is in place, the physician injects numbing medicine onto the nerves. This medicine temporarily numbs sensation. If this area is the source of your pain, you will experience immediate pain relief. More than one level of the spine may need to be injected.

End of Procedure

When the procedure is complete, you will be monitored for a brief time and then allowed to go home. A medial branch block may relieve your pain for the next few hours. You may be asked to keep track of your pain level as the medicine wears off. If the block was successful, your physician may recommend a procedure called radiofrequency ablation. This can provide more permanent pain relief.

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