Medial Branch Block

The medial branch nerves are small nerve branches that transmit pain from the facet joints (small joints between vertebrae). The nerves do not control any muscles or sensation in your arms or legs. They are located along a boney groove in your back and neck. Your facet joints may be the source of your pain. Therefore, you may benefit from having the small medial branch nerves treated with radiofrequency heat, non-surgically, with a special needle. Before actually treating the nerve with radiofrequency, we first block the nerve signal with numbing medicine as a test. This tells us whether you are likely to benefit from having the medial branch nerves treated at a later date with radiofrequency heat.

What happens during the medial branch block procedure?
An IV will be started for cervical/thoracic and possibly for lumbar medial branch blocks to provide you with relaxation medicine, if needed. After lying on an X-ray table, your skin will be well cleaned. Next, the physician will numb a small area of skin with numbing medicine, which stings for a few seconds. Next, the physician will use X-ray guidance to direct a very small needle over the medial branch nerves. Pain will not be provoked, if at all possible. Next he will inject a small amount of numbing medicine around the nerves.

What should I expect after a medial branch block?
After 20–30 minutes you will resume activity and try to provoke your usual pain. You will report your pain level, on a scale of 0–10, and also record your pain level and activity level hourly during the next 8–10 hours in a pain record provided to you. **Bring the completed pain record to your next scheduled office appointment.**

Be aware that the anesthetic will take several hours to wear off. **It is imperative that you have someone to drive you home**, as you may experience some temporary loss of sensation and may find your motor coordination a bit awkward or weak. Otherwise, you may resume your regular activities the following day. You may call (404) 778-7000 if you have any questions.