

Facet joint injections for back pain

CRITERIA BASED ACCESS

One medial branch block for the diagnosis and one injection for the management of cervical, thoracic and lumbar back pain is commissioned as specified below:

- Facet joint pain is confirmed by controlled diagnostic local anaesthetic block AND
- The pain has lasted for more than one year (except in case of trauma) AND
- The pain has resulted in moderate to significant impact on daily functioning (assessed using a validated tool such as Oswestry Disability Index) AND
- All conservative management options (exercise, pharmacotherapy including analgesia and muscle relaxants) have been tried and failed AND
- The patient is part of a comprehensive pain management programme (including physiotherapy, psychological support, medication and patient education)
- If patient is unable to co-operate with physiotherapy treatment due to pain offer facet joint injection followed by return to the physiotherapy programme (minimum 8 weeks)

Intra-articular facet joint injections are low priority procedures.

Occasionally, facet joint injections may be the only effective treatment for a cohort of patients. These patients may be considered for prior approval for further facet joint injections if they demonstrate sustained benefit from the procedure objectively evidenced and

- must have participated in a comprehensive back pain programme including psychology and physiotherapy e.g Coping with pain course and
- must have been considered for denervation procedures and
- must have had a surgical review and
- must participate in self-directed physiotherapy.