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**THE CENTER FOR PAIN MEDICINE  
MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL**

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**MEDIAL BRANCH BLOCKS  
(BLOCKS OF THE NERVES TO THE FACET JOINTS)**

***Instruction Sheet for Patients***

*Should I limit my activity or change my diet after the injection?* No. Unless your doctor tells you otherwise, you may return to your usual activities and resume your normal diet immediately after the injection.

*Are there any side effects caused by a medial branch block?* Side effects are uncommon following a medial branch block.

- Immediately after the injection, you may feel that your pain is gone or is much less. This pain relief is often from the local anesthetic and will usually only last a few hours, followed by return of your usual pain.
- You may experience mild pain at the site of injection for several days. You may also experience a temporary increase in your usual pain after the injection. You can apply ice to the area for as long as 15 minutes, 3 – 4 times a day for localized pain.
- You may experience some dizziness during or soon after the injection.

*Are there any restrictions after a medial branch block?* Yes. You should follow these restrictions:

- Do not drive for the remainder of the day
- Do not take a tub bath or soak in water (i.e. pool, hot tub) for 24 hours after the procedure
- Please allow 3 days post procedure before resuming physical therapy

*What are the medications used for a medial branch block?*

- Lidocaine or bupivacaine are local anesthetics which are used to numb the area of injection; this numbness usually wears off within 2 - 6 hours.

*When should I call my doctor?* You should call us immediately if any of the following occur:

- If you experience any swelling, redness, bleeding or discharge from the site of the injection
- If you have a fever greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit
- If you experience new or worsening back or neck pain
- If you experience a new numbness or weakness in your arms or legs
- If you have new difficulty with urination after the injection, like difficulty urinating or suddenly losing control of your bladder
- If you have new difficulty with your bowel movements after the injection, like suddenly losing control of your bowels

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*How can I reach a doctor from the Center?* There is a doctor on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week who can be reached as follows:

- DURING OFFICE HOURS (Monday thru Friday, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm) , please call (617) 726-8810 and leave a message for the physician on the nurses' line
- AFTER HOURS AND ON WEEKENDS, please call (617-726-2000) and ask the hospital operator to page the physician on call for the MGH Pain Service
- IF FOR ANY REASON YOU ARE UNABLE TO REACH A PHYSICIAN FROM OUR CENTER and you are having any of the problems listed above, please go to the nearest Emergency Room and show them this document