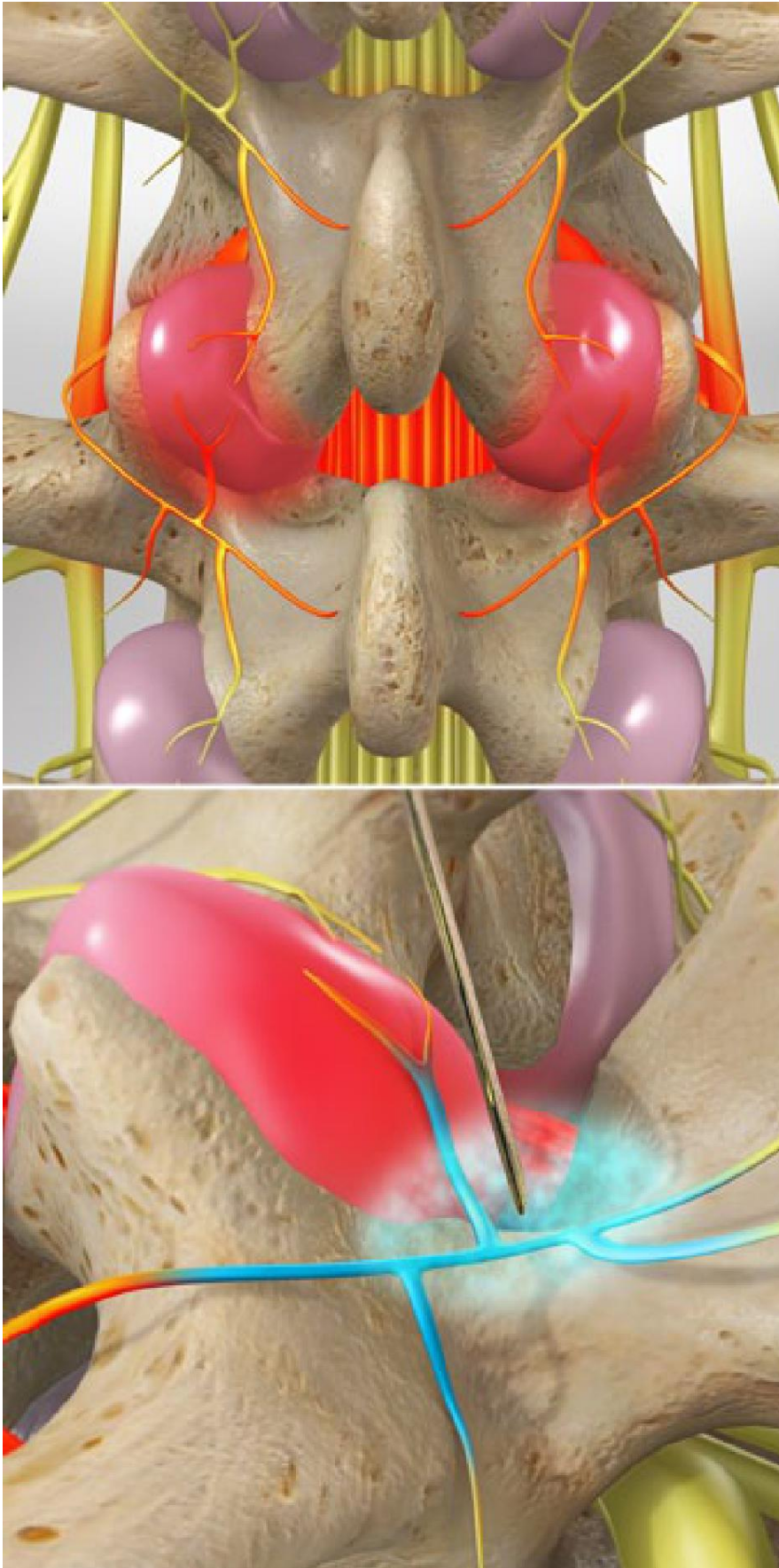




Medial Branch Block



Overview

This is an injection of numbing medicine. It bathes the medial branch nerves, which attach to the facet joints of your spine. These nerves hurt when facet joints are injured or diseased. The injection helps find the source of your pain. And it may relieve your pain for a brief time.

Preparation

To begin, your doctor injects local anesthetic. This numbs your skin and tissue around the areas to be injected.

Inserting the needle

Next, your doctor guides a thin needle through the numbed tissue. A video x-ray device called a "fluoroscope" helps find your medial branch nerves. Contrast dye is injected to make sure the needle is in the right place.

Injection

Then, the doctor injects numbing medicine onto the nerves. The medicine temporarily numbs the nerves. If this area is the source of your pain, you'll feel immediate pain relief. More than one level of the spine may need to be injected.

End of procedure

When the procedure is finished, you'll be watched for a brief time. Then you can go home. You may feel pain relief 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 doctor can recommend a procedure to provide long-lasting relief.