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## Facet Joint Arthropathy

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Facet joint arthropathy refers to a degenerative disease that affects the joints of the spine and the disintegration of cartilage on those joints. Understanding certain medical terms and a general anatomy of the spine is an important first step in pursuing a correct diagnosis and treatment of this condition.

First, you should be aware that facet joint arthropathy can go by other names, such as facet joint arthrosis or, most commonly, facet joint osteoarthritis. Osteoarthritis is one of many types of arthritis – there are actually more than 100 different types of arthritis in existence – but osteoarthritis is the most widespread. Generally speaking, osteoarthritis is the result of normal, age-related degeneration.

Next, let's discuss the spinal anatomy involved in osteoarthritis. The strongest structures of the spine are the vertebrae, which essentially are bones stacked into a column. This column of hard bones is able to move because joint surfaces, called facet joints, are located on the top and bottom of the vertebrae. The facet joints are coated with cartilage and a synovial membrane that secretes lubricating fluid; these coatings keep neck and back motion smooth and supple. When facet joint arthropathy occurs, cartilage begins to wear away from the facet joints. This forces the bony vertebrae to make direct contact with one another, making any movement of the joint stiff and painful.

One way that our body copes with a facet joint degeneration like facet joint arthropathy is by overcompensating for the lost cartilage. For instance, the body might manufacture extra growths of smooth bone along the facet joints of the vertebrae in an attempt to strengthen the damaged joint. These growths are called osteophytes, though they are more commonly known as bone spurs. Bone spurs can infringe on the spaces through which spinal nerve roots pass, pinching nerves and causing symptoms like numbness, tingling or radiating pain in the extremities.

If you have spoken with your physician and he or she has diagnosed you with facet joint arthropathy, you may want to consider a facet joint surgery aimed at releasing nerves from bone spur impingement. Laser Spine Institute is at the forefront of spine surgery technology, and our procedures are minimally invasive. [Contact](#) Laser Spine Institute today for a free review of your MRI or CT scan, and to learn how we can help you find relief from neck and back pain.



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\*\*The opinions expressed in patient testimonials are by patients only; they are not qualified medical professionals. These opinions should not be relied upon as, or in place of, the medical advice of a licensed doctor or other health care provider.