

Perched facet joint

Facets that have not completely locked but have had significant ligamentous disruption allowing **distraction** just short of the point of locking are known as **perched** facets.

see **Locked facets**.

A perched facet joint is a vertebral facet joint whose inferior articular process appears to sit 'perched' on the ipsilateral superior articular process of the vertebra below.

Any further anterior subluxation will result in dislocation, with one facet "jumping" over the other and becoming locked in this position (see jumped facet joint).

Pathology

Unilateral perched facet results from the flexion-rotation force. Perched bilateral facets are also possible.

Radiographic features

Plain radiograph

malalignment of the lateral masses the tips of adjacent facets touch each other i.e. inferior articular process of a vertebra appears to sit 'perched' on the superior articular process of the vertebra below

CT

distracted facet with uncovering of the articular surface

Complications

Spinal cord injury, especially with bilateral involvement, or in the setting of canal stenosis

Vertebral artery injury, e.g. dissection, thrombosis

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