

What are the risks?

There are risks, side effects, and the possibility of complications with any injection breaking the skin. Although the risks are low, bleeding, infection and allergic reaction are possible. This is minimized by the use of sterile technique for the procedure. You may experience soreness or increased pain after the procedure.

It is rare that complications occur since the RF needle is positioned by a trained provider using X-ray guidance. Safety tests include 2 types of electrical stimulation to confirm correct needle placement: First, you will be asked to identify when you just start to feel a slight pressure (Like an old-fashioned hearing test). Next, a strong muscle pulsing will be used to make sure the needle is not close to the motor nerves to your legs and pelvis.

How should I prepare?

- You should not have anything to eat or drink after midnight before the procedure if you are scheduled before noon. A light low-fat breakfast is OK if you are scheduled for the afternoon.
- You should have no aspirin products, platelet inhibitors or blood thinners for five days before the procedure. This includes Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil, etc.) These products increase bleeding time and could cause excessive bleeding during the procedure.
- Take your other medication as regularly scheduled. If you are diabetic, do not take your morning insulin if you will be fasting.
- Although you may drive yourself to and from the procedure (if you have not received sedation), bringing a friend is encouraged.

When should I return to the office?

You should make an appointment for a follow-up about two weeks after the procedure. You should notify the office if you have unusual problems or concerns, such as fever, bleeding, new severe pain, prolonged numbness or swelling at the injection site.



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Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA)



What you should know about your procedure

Pain management is a *process*.
Your treatment is tailored to your special needs.

RFA is a procedure used in the treatment of chronic pain. This brochure explains the procedure, why it works, how you can prepare, and how you can expect to feel after the procedure.

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What is radiofrequency ablation (RFA)?

RFA is a non-surgical technique initially introduced in 1974 for treatment of chronic spine pain.

Radiofrequency energy is used to produce heat to create a lesion — an interruption at the nerve “tail.” This blocks the pain signal from reaching the brain. The nerve itself is not damaged and eventually grows a new “tail.” The equipment used allows lesioning of the small nerves carrying sensory information from the facet joints.

How does it work?

Using X-ray guidance, an electrode is positioned at the root of the nerve causing your pain. This nerve was identified when you underwent facet mapping.

This electrode is then connected to a radiofrequency generator that produces radiofrequency energy. This generates heat at the tip of the electrode. This heat then causes a lesion in the nerve that prevents the transmission of the pain signal.



Will the procedure hurt?

The lumbar and thoracic RF procedure is done in the office using local anesthesia. Cervical facet RF procedures are performed with IV sedation in a surgery center. A local anesthetic is first injected into the tissue to numb the area. This is usually felt as a tiny bee sting before numbness sets in.

After the RF needle is inserted, an electrical current is generated from the RF machine. This may feel like a buzzing or tingling sensation or pressure in the area. You may also feel your muscles jump. It is important that you tell your provider what sensations you are feeling and in which areas of your body you are feeling the stimulation. This will help confirm for the provider that they are in the right area. Local anesthetic is given through the RF needle to minimize discomfort from the lesioning procedure.



How long does the pain relief last?

The nerve will regenerate over time and the pain usually returns within 2 years. The length of time that this takes to occur will be different with each person. When the pain recurs, radiofrequency ablation can usually be repeated. There is no limit to the number of times that you can have this procedure in a lifetime.

What should I expect after the procedure?

- You can expect some muscle soreness after the procedure. Ice packs can be used, 15 minutes on, 15 minutes off to relieve this.
- You should continue to take your prescribed medications as directed by your doctor.

Any restrictions after my procedure?

If you receive sedation, you will not be allowed to drive yourself home, since the medicines used can cause drowsiness, decrease coordination and slow your reaction time.

Otherwise, having your procedure performed with just local anesthesia, you can resume your normal activity as tolerated and should be able to return to work on the next day.

