

RADIOFREQUENCY ABLATION



What is Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA)?

Radiofrequency ablation is an effective treatment for chronic back pain from degenerative disc disease. A diagnostic test known as medial branch block is performed prior to receiving RFA. During this procedure pain causing nerve roots are destroyed using radio frequency waves. This procedure is also used to treat neurological conditions such as cerebral palsy and is sometimes referred to as facet rhizotomy when used to treat back pain.

Facet radiofrequency ablation is an outpatient procedure, performed using a simple probe heated with radio waves to effectively sever the nerve root found between the facet joint and vertebral body. Radiofrequency ablation provides several months of relief from back pain. The nerves will eventually grow back but the pain may or may not return. If the pain does return, you may want to have the procedure repeated (usually with equal success).

How is a Facet Radiofrequency Ablation Performed?

Patients who are candidates for RFA typically have undergone several facet joint injections to verify the source and exact location of their pain. Using a local anesthetic and x-ray guidance, a needle with an electrode at the tip is placed alongside the small nerves to the facet joint. The electrode is then heated, with a technology called radiofrequency, to kill these nerves that carry pain signals to the brain. The entire procedure usually takes between 30-60 minutes.

What to Expect After the Procedure

On the day of the injection you should not drive and you should avoid any strenuous activities. On the day after the procedure, you may cautiously return to your regular activities, but most rest for an additional 1-2 days. Your neck or back will usually be sore during the next several weeks. This pain is usually caused by muscle spasms and irritability while the targeted nerves are dying from the heat lesion which may take 7-21 days. Pain relief usually is not experienced until about 3-4

weeks after the procedure when the nerves have completely died.

In Pain? We Can Help.

[Request an Appointment](#)