

Radiofrequency Ablation

Radiofrequency ablation is a treatment option for patients with neck and back pain related to arthritis, car accident and trauma.

What is Radiofrequency ablation?

Radiofrequency ablation is a treatment option for patients with neck and back pain related to arthritis, car accident and trauma. Radiofrequency ablation utilizes a specialized generator that produces radiofrequency current. This current passes through a needle and results in precise heating at the tip of the needle which is placed near the nerve carrying pain signals from the facet joints. The heat destroys the nerve tissue surrounding the facet joints, interrupting pain signals and providing pain relief. The effect can last anywhere from 6 months up to 2 years.

How is the procedure done?

You will be lying on an X-ray table on your stomach. Blood pressure, heart rate and breathing are monitored. The injection site is cleansed with an antiseptic soap. Each insertion site will be anesthetized (numbed) using local anesthetic. Your physician inserts a needle through the skin and soft tissues under fluoroscopy (X-ray) guidance. The needle is directed toward the nerve surrounding the facet joint. A radiofrequency probe is placed into each needle and you will be asked to let the physician know when you feel a buzzing, tingling, or pressure sensation. This stimulation is done before any heating of the area around the nerves takes place. This is a temporary sensation. The tissues surrounding the needle tip are then heated for 90 seconds at each level resulting in interruption of the pain signal. This procedure takes approximately 30 minutes. It may take a few weeks before you notice pain relief.

What are side effects and complications?

Side effects and complications are uncommon. Potential side effects and complications include:

- Allergic reaction to medications
- Increased pain for a short period of time

How often the procedure can be repeated?

The procedure may be repeated every 6 months if needed.

How should I prepare myself for this procedure?

- You should have a driver available to give you a ride home after the procedure. A driver is required if you are being sedated.
- If you are on any blood thinners, please call the clinic at 701-551-6980 to receive instructions about your medication.
- If you are having IV sedation, you should not have anything to eat or drink 8 hours before the procedure. You may take your medications and have clear liquids up to 2 hours before the procedure.

When should I call my doctor?

You should call us immediately if any of the following occur:

- If you experience any swelling, redness, or drainage
- If you have a fever greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit
- If you experience new or worsening back or neck pain
- If you experience a new numbness or weakness in your arms or legs