

Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA)

What is a radiofrequency ablation?

- Radiofrequency ablation (RFA) is a minimally invasive, non-surgical procedure used to provide lasting relief from chronic pain.
- RFA treatment targets specific nerves to block pain signals from reaching the brain.

Why would this injection be helpful?

- If you have had two successful medial branch blocks, you may be a candidate for RFA.
- RFA procedures target the same levels/areas that the medial branch block did and provide an average of 6-12 months pain relief.

Risks and side effects?

- Your provider will discuss risks and side effects with you at the time the procedure is ordered.
- Common short term side effects may occur including numbness, weakness, and increased pain or burning sensation.

What happens during the procedure?

- You must arrive 30 minutes prior to your scheduled appt. The nurses will ask you medical questions, have you sign your consent, and review your medications.
- The procedure is typically done under x-ray guidance.
- The nurse will monitor your vital signs throughout the procedure.
- A grounding pad will be placed on your skin, typically on your thigh. This allows the RFA generator to work safely.
- Your skin will be washed with an antiseptic solution.
- The provider will direct needles into the desired levels and inject numbing medicine. The needles/probes are connected to a generator that delivers energy, heating your nerve tissue. The heat stuns the nerve tissue, which then becomes unable to send pain signals to your brain, thus providing pain relief.

What happens after the procedure?

- You will go to the recovery room for monitoring until discharge criteria is met, ice pack will be provided.
- Follow your discharge instructions.
- A nurse will call you the next business day after your procedure to check on you further.
- It is common to feel soreness/burning sensation after the RFA. This may last several days to weeks. Monitor for any signs of infection such as redness, swelling, odor, drainage, or fever and report as directed on discharge instructions.
- Avoid heating pads at the site for several weeks.
- We encourage you to use ice. It may help decrease post procedure discomfort. Make sure to use a barrier (towel/cloth, etc) between your skin and the ice pack.
- It may take 2-4 weeks before you feel the benefit of the RFA procedure. Pain relief lasts 6-12 months on average.