

RADIOFREQUENCY ABLATION (RFA)

is an outpatient procedure for treatment of lower back, buttock, hip, groin, neck pain and headaches. This information has been provided by your provider so you can better understand this procedure. Your provider will make the best recommendation for your specific needs.

This pamphlet is for general education only. Specific questions or concerns should always be directed to your provider. Your provider can explain possible risks or side effects.

RADIOFREQUENCY ABLATION (RFA)

for Lower Back, Buttock, Hip,
Groin, Neck Pain & Headaches



PMG PATIENT EDUCATION SERIES

PAIN
MANAGEMENT
Group | pmg

Advanced
HEALTH

ThePainManagementGroup.com

p: 615.941.8501



RADIOFREQUENCY ABLATION (RFA)

for Lower Back, Buttock, Hip, Groin, Neck Pain & Headaches

What are facet joints?

Facet joints, located on both sides of the spine, are small but guide the spine in movement. These are named for the vertebrae they connect and the side of the spine where they are found.

What is facet joint pain?

Facet joint pain is a result of injury, either to the cartilage inside the joint or the connecting ligaments surrounding the joint.

Pain from an injured facet joint may range from muscle tension to more severe pain. Depending on which facet joint is affected, the pain may occur in an area from your neck and lower back down to your buttocks. Areas of pain typically associated with specific joints include: your buttocks if lumbar; upper back to lower back if thoracic; and lower neck to back of head if cervical. Common tests such as x-rays or MRIs may not always show if a facet joint is the reason for your pain. The best way to diagnose facet pain is to block the pain signal that communicates the pain from the facet joints.

What is a RFA?

RFA uses radio frequency energy to disrupt nerve function. When this is done to a medial branch nerve, the nerve can no longer transmit pain signals from an injured facet joint. This may help reduce pain.

What to expect during RFA?

An IV may be inserted to administer intravenous medication(s) to help you relax. A local anesthetic will be used to numb your skin.

Fluoroscopy, a type of x-ray, will be used to ensure the safe and proper position of the needle. The doctor will then check that the needle is in the proper position by stimulating the nerve.

This may cause muscle twitching and provoke some of your pain. With the needle in the correct position, the area will be numbed.

Your provider will then use radio frequency energy to disrupt the medial branch nerve. This is commonly called “burning” the nerve.

What happens after an RFA?

You will be monitored for up to 30 minutes after the injection. Before you leave, you will be given discharge instructions.

You may feel sore for one to four days. This is normal and may be caused by muscle and nerve irritation. Your neck or lower back may feel numb, weak, or itchy for a couple of weeks. Be patient, as full pain relief normally takes two to three weeks.

While it varies from patient to patient, nerves can take up to 18 months to regenerate after an RFA. Your pain may or may not return when the nerves regenerate. If it does, another RFA can be done.

Is RFA safe?

RFA has been proven to be a safe and effective treatment for some types of pain. It generally has very few associated complications and is well-tolerated and effective for most patients. As with any injection, there is a slight risk of infection and bleeding at the injection site.

Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA) is an outpatient procedure for treatment of lower back, buttock, hip, groin, neck pain and headaches. This information has been provided by your provider so you can better understand this procedure. Your provider will make the best recommendation for your specific needs.