

RADIOFREQUENCY ABLATION

WHAT IS IT

This is a treatment to reduce pain from facet joints. The facet joints are thumbnail sized joints that are located in pairs between each bone of your spine.

Radiofrequency energy is used to heat and destroy the nerves going to the facet joints (called the medial branch nerves) to reduce the pain coming from these joints. To ensure proper placement of the treatment probe, the procedure is done under fluoroscopy (a low dose x-ray).

PURPOSE

Facet joints can become painful due to injury, arthritis, or other conditions. This treatment can reduce the pain from facet joints.

WHAT TO EXPECT

During the injection, pain is sometimes increased temporarily. You will be awake during the injection, but sedation can be given if you make prior arrangements with your doctor. The procedure can be stopped immediately at any time upon your request. Following the procedure you may experience some increased discomfort for about 2-3 days while the steroid medication is taking effect. Most people are able to return to work and usual activities on the following day.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS

Every medical procedure, no matter how small, contains some risks. Anytime a needle is placed into your body there is a risk of tissue injury, infection, and bleeding. If this occurs in or near the spine it can result in severe damage. Although extremely rare, severe nerve damage and death have occurred following spine injections. Injections near the spine also risk dural puncture and spinal headache. More common risks include temporary increase in pain, local tenderness after the injection, allergic reaction to medication, and side effects from the steroids.