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neurosciencegroup

Your Guide to Radiofrequency Ablations

What is a Radiofrequency Ablation?

A Radiofrequency Ablation (also known as a neurotomy) is a procedure in which a small needle electrode is inserted near your medial nerves that are located on your facet joints in the back or the neck. A slight radio wave electrical current is then used to heat the area of the nerve that is causing you pain. This prevents the signal from being sent back to your brain.

How can a Radiofrequency Ablation help me?

A Radiofrequency Ablation can be an effective nonsurgical treatment by heating the affected nerves and interrupting the pain signal to help ease your pain. This type of procedure most often helps manage pain caused from joint degeneration and arthritis.

Will I have immediate relief after my Radiofrequency Ablation?

Radiofrequency Ablation procedures typically do not have an immediate effect. Full effect of a radiofrequency ablation procedure usually occurs within 14-30 days after the injection. You may still feel pain relief immediately afterwards from an anesthetic that was used, however it typically wears off in 4-8 hours.

How do I prepare for my Radiofrequency Ablation?

Ensure your doctor knows if:

You are taking Coumadin or any other blood thinners: *Plavix, Aspirin, Eliquis, Excedrin, fish oil, etc.*

You are taking steroids and or antibiotics.

You have liver or kidney disease: *chronic kidney disease, cirrhosis, etc.*

You have the following implantable devices: *medication pump, pacemaker, defibrillator, or stimulator.*

You have any allergies: *steroids, anesthetic, iodine, adhesive, contrast, shellfish.*

You have any questions regarding your medication.

You have had or are planning to have a vaccine within 2 weeks of your procedure.

****Please call to cancel your appointment if you have a fever, the flu, covid, or any other infection****

What can I do the day of my Radiofrequency Ablation?

- You may eat and drink normally; there is no need to fast.
- Take your normal medication on the day of your test, unless otherwise instructed.
- You will need to shower with antibacterial soap the day before and the day of your procedure.
- Do NOT apply lotions, creams, ointments, or gels the day of your procedure.
- Wear loose fitting clothing including elastic waist band pants/shorts.
- Do not plan any strenuous activity the day of your procedure.
- **Bring someone with you who can remain on campus to drive you home.**
(The length of the procedure itself is approximately 30 minutes).

What can I expect during the procedure?

You will need to be able to get yourself up onto the procedure table and position yourself on your stomach.

You will remain on your stomach for the entire length of the procedure.

The area of your injection will be cleansed with an antiseptic solution.

Your skin will be numbed with a local anesthetic.

Then the physician will use fluoroscopy (x-ray) to guide the placement of the needle electrode into the affected area.

Then a small amount of electricity will stimulate the affected nerves. Then numbing medication will be injected and the radiofrequency electricity will heat the nerve.

Once one radiofrequency ablation is completed, the provider may repeat the same procedure on one or more additional nerves.

Once the radiofrequency ablation is complete the needle is removed, your back will be cleaned off, a band aid will be applied, and the procedure is complete.

What happens after my Radiofrequency Ablation?

- You will spend about 10 minutes in the recovery room reviewing post-procedure instructions with the nurse prior to discharging. You may require a longer stay in recovery if additional monitoring is necessary.
- You will receive a pain diary after your procedure. **This will need to be filled out by you and you will need to call Neuroscience Group three - four weeks after your procedure to update us on the pain numbers you logged. Please do not lose or misplace your diary.**
- You may experience warmth, numbness, tingling, heaviness, or weakness to the area for up to 8 hours after your procedure.
- You may experience pain to your skin that is sensitive to touch. This occurs due to an expected temporary, sunburn like effect on the outside of the nerve.
- You will NOT be able to drive or operate heavy machinery for 8 hours after your procedure.
- If you are diabetic, you will notice a temporary increase in your blood sugars for up to a week if a steroid was used.
- You can shower after your procedure. However, NO SOAKING in tub, hot tub, pool, etc. for 24 hours.
- You will need to refrain from strenuous activity and heavy lifting for the remainder of the day.
- You may return to work the following day.

Questions about your Radiofrequency Ablation procedure?

Call Heather, our Physiatry Nurse Navigator, 920-725-9373