

## What to expect after the procedure?

You will be provided with discharge instructions that the nurse will review with you.

Please keep track of your pain response and consider making a follow-up appointment with your referring provider after your procedure. It may take four to six weeks to see results from your procedure.

## How long does the effect last?

There is great variability of pain relief among patients, on average, the effects of the procedure can last six to twelve months or longer.

## May RFA treatments be repeated?

Typically if you received significant benefit from this procedure for at least six months, this procedure may be repeated.

If you have questions about your procedure please call the Pain Clinic:

**802 748-7345**

If you speak another language, language assistance services, free of charge, are available to you. Ask for assistance.

Si vous parlez français, des services d'aide linguistique vous sont proposés gratuitement. Demandez de l'aide.

Si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Pedir ayuda.



NORTHEASTERN VERMONT  
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## The Pain Clinic

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## THE PAIN CLINIC

### INFORMATION FOR OUR PATIENTS

# Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA)

## What is radiofrequency ablation?

Radiofrequency ablation is a procedure that uses a specialized machine to generate radio frequency current.

Guided by x-ray, a special needle is placed next to the medial branch nerve. This nerve carries pain signals from spinal facet joints to the spinal cord and then to the brain. This nerve does not control the muscles or sensation to the leg. The radiofrequency current passes through the needle. The current generates heat, creating a lesion at the nerve site that interrupts the transmission of pain signals. These nerves recover function slowly with time.

## Who can have the procedure?

If you have a pacemaker, spinal cord stimulator, or vagus nerve stimulator, please inform the provider as this may interfere with your ability to have this procedure.

Prior to the initial radiofrequency procedure, you are required to have one or two successful diagnostic nerve blocks performed (see medial branch block information).

## Before the procedure:

If you are taking blood thinners, antibiotics, steroids, have an active infection, or have a bleeding disorder, you should not have the procedure without further discussion and a plan.

Please let us know of any allergies you have, especially to local anesthetics, contrast dyes, and latex.

**Do not have anything to eat after midnight the night before your procedure. You may have clear liquids up to three hours before the procedure time.**

**You will not be able to drive for 24 hours after the procedure.** Please make sure that you have a driver to take you home. Your procedure will be rescheduled if you do not have a driver.

## How is this procedure performed?

The procedure is performed while you lie on your stomach. Your heart rate and blood pressure are monitored. Most patients receive medication to reduce anxiety. The skin is cleaned with antiseptic solution and numbed with local anesthetic medication. Then the needles are placed with x-ray guidance; the nerves are tested for proper placement. Once confirmed, the ablation is performed.

## How long does the procedure take?

The procedure takes between 45 and 90 minutes, depending on the site of treatment and the number of treatments that need to be performed.

## What are the potential complications of RF?

- Soreness
- Mild sunburn sensation
- Infection
- Bleeding
- Nerve damage
- Adverse reaction to the medication