

Important Notes

Do not stop any anti-platelet/ anti-coagulant medications (eg. Aspirin, Plavix, Coumadin, etc.) unless instructed to do so by a HealthPointe Physician.

Questions or Concerns

For any additional information, questions, or concerns regarding your appointment or booking process, please feel free to contact our clinic at 780-453-5255

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Thoracic Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA)



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What is a Thoracic RFA?

This outpatient procedure is used to help with treating upper and middle back pain.

What are Thoracic Facet Joints?

Facet joints are found on either side of the spine. Each of these joints is about the size of a thumbnail. In the Thoracic spine, there are 12 vertebrae and ribs that are connected by facet joints.

Facet joints connect vertebrae to one another along with guide the spine when moving.

Medial branch nerves are located near facet joints. They communicate pain from facet joints. Therefore these nerves tell the brain when the facet joint has been injured or hurt.

Injury to a facet joint typically involves damage to cartilage inside the joint connecting ligaments surrounding the joint.

Pain from an injured thoracic facet joint may range from muscle tension/tightness to more severe pain. This pain can radiate into different areas, depending on which facet joint is injured/affected.

Do I have Thoracic Facet Joint Pain?

If you have pain for greater than 2 months in the upper and middle back pain.

Tests such as X-rays or MRIs do not always show if the facet is the reason for your pain. The best way to test if you have this pain is to block the pain signal from the medial branch nerve.

A Thoracic RFA disrupts the function of the thoracic medial branch nerve. The medial branch nerve is then no longer able to transmit pain signals from the affected facet joint.

RFA Procedure

A thin needle is inserted near the facet joint under fluoroscopy (a type of X-ray). Fluoroscopy is used to position the needle.

The area will be numbed with an anesthetic medication with the correct needle position. The Physician will use radiofrequency energy to disrupt the medial branch nerve signal.

How Long Should the Pain Relief Last?

After your Thoracic RFA procedure, you will be monitored for approximately 30 minutes. The clinic will give you appropriate instructions to follow for care after the procedure.

We caution against driving after an RFA procedure.

Post-procedure soreness may be experienced. Typically this soreness is caused by muscle and nerve irritation and can last 2-4 weeks. The full benefits of pain relief take usually 6-12 weeks.

Nerves will regenerate after the RFA procedure. However the time it takes for them to regenerate varies from 8-24 months. Your typical pain may or may not return after this nerve regeneration. If your pain does return another RFA can be done.