

## Important Notes

Do not stop any anti-platelet/ anti-coagulant medications (eg. Aspirin, Plavix, Coumadin, etc.) unless instructed to do so by a HealthPointe@CAO 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 403-309-2001

Visit NeuPath's Knowledge Centre for free online patient tools & resources.



**HealthPointe**  
at **CAO** BY NEUPATH

## Cervical Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA)



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## What is a Cervical RFA?

This outpatient procedure is used to help with treating headaches, neck, shoulder, and upper back pain.

## What are Cervical Facet Joints?

Facet joints are found on either side of the spine. Each of these joints is about the size of a thumbnail. There are 7 vertebrae in the cervical spine that are connected by facet joints.

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

Medial branch nerves are located near facet joints. They communicate pain from facet joints to the brain. Therefore the nerves tell the brain when the facet joint has been irritated.

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

Pain from an injured cervical joint may range from mild muscle tension to more severe pain. This pain can radiate into different areas, often the shoulder blade area, depending on which facet joint is irritated.

## Do I have Cervical Facet Joint Pain?

If you have pain for greater than 2 months in the head, neck, shoulder, or upper back area you may have facet joint 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 Cervical RFA disrupts the function of the cervical medial branch nerve temporarily. The medial branch nerve is then no longer able to transmit pain signals from the affected facet joint to the brain.

## 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 accurately and safely. The nerve will be stimulated by the Physician to assess if the needle is in the proper position. This can cause some of your symptoms to be reproduced and/or your arm or hand to twitch.

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

## How Long Should the Pain Relief Last?

After your Cervical RFA procedure, you will be monitored for approximately 30 minutes. The clinic will give you appropriate directions to follow for care following 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.