



Important Notes

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

Please arrive with your pain level of 5/10 or greater to ensure that you will be able to notice the effects of the injection. If your pain level is less than 5/10, your injection may be rebooked.

You may want to avoid taking pain medications on the day of the procedure.



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Lumbar Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA)



What is a Lumbar RFA?

This outpatient procedure is used to help with treating lower back, hip, and groin pain

What are Lumbar 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 lumbar spine, there are 5 vertebrae 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. 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 and connecting ligaments surrounding the joint.

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

Do I have Lumbar Facet Joint Pain?

If you have pain for greater than 2 months in the lower back, hip, and/or groin area you may have lumbar 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 Lumbar RFA disrupts the function of the lumbar 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 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 leg or foot 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 signals.

How Long Should the Pain Relief Last?

After your Lumbar RFA procedure, you will be monitored for approximately 30 minutes. The clinic will give you appropriate instructions 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.

