

What is radiofrequency (RF) ablation?

Radiofrequency (RF) treatment is a minimally invasive procedure that can provide intermediate to long-term pain reduction for various types of chronic pain.

Radiofrequency neurotomy creates a heat lesion on certain nerves with the aim of interrupting the pain signals to the brain, thereby, eliminating the pain.

It provides longer-lasting relief compared to cortisone injections. If you have had pain relief with a test block, you may be a candidate for radiofrequency neurotomy.

It is performed on small nerve branches of the spine that cause pain.

Pulsed radiofrequency (pRF)

Pulsed radiofrequency (pRF) uses a slightly lower temperature heat on more delicate nerves to provide long-lasting pain relief.

The procedure can be performed on any nerve that causes pain.

For more Information, Videos and Resources, visit our website.

sydneyaspinepain.com

Locations

Waratah Private Hospital
Suite 705, Level 7, 31 Dora Street
Hurstville NSW 2220

St Vincent's Clinic (Level 8)
Suite 810, 438 Victoria Street
Darlinghurst NSW 2010

Prince of Wales Private Hospital
Suite 24, Level 7, Barker Street
Randwick NSW 2031

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Radiofrequency Ablation



What to do before the procedure?

Organise transport home with a family member or friend as you won't be able to drive for 24 hours following your procedure.

You will be advised of your fasting and admission time.

If you are on regular medication, you may take it with a sip of water on the morning of your procedure.

Please tell your doctor if you are taking blood-thinning medications because you might need to stop them.

Continue ALL of your pain medication as usual.

If you are a smoker, you are required to stop smoking a minimum of 7 days prior to your procedure.

What happens at the hospital?

When you arrive, you will be admitted for day surgery and changed into a gown.

Our Anaesthetist will provide sedation before the procedure through an IV drip.

The procedure takes around 30-40 minutes.

The radiofrequency is delivered to the targeted nerves via needles inserted through the skin around your spine.

After the procedure, you will be taken to the Recovery Room where you will rest.

Keep in mind that you will be at the hospital for at least 3-4 hours in total.

When should I start to feel pain relief?

It may take from a few days to 6 weeks for the radiofrequency to begin to work.

What happens when I go home?

You will be discharged once there is no worsening pain.

Normal activities may resume 2 days after the procedure.

You may experience common side effects such as:

1. Discomfort, increased pain, and/or muscle stiffness/spasms: These symptoms may last for a few days to 6 weeks. For this issue, we recommend applying warm packs on the affected area 24 hours after the procedure for 30 minutes, 2-3 times a day until it settles. We also recommend engaging in gentle stretching exercises as well as taking over the counter or prescribed analgesics.

*Do not apply warm packs for inflammation or haematoma. Be careful with hot temperatures if there is numbness.

2. Rashes on the injection site: This may last for 2-4 weeks and it resolves on its own. Antibiotics are not necessary for this issue.

Most people are able to manage these side effects with over the counter medications.

When to seek medical attention?

Contact your GP or Local Emergency Department, if you experience the following:

- A temperature above 38^o that does not improve.
- Loss of bowel or bladder control.
- Loss or worsening of muscle strength in the limbs.
- A headache in the standing position that is only relieved by lying down.

When should I come back for a follow-up?

Usually 4 to 6 weeks after your procedure.

What activities can I do after the injection?

In the first 24 hours: We recommend that you rest and only participate in necessary gentle daily activities. Continue taking your prescribed medications as advised by your doctor.

In the first 2 to 3 days: You may experience discomfort at the injection site which you may take simple analgesics like Panadol or Nurofen.

After 3 days: Return to your usual activities up to the point of your personal comfort. Your pain experiences should start to diminish.

You may be able to return to work at this point with mild discomfort.

How long will my pain relief last?

This will depend on the severity of spinal degeneration but can range from 9 to 18 months.