

Radiofrequency Treatments

Pulsed Radiofrequency Treatments for Pain - an electrical pulse is applied through a special needle targeting a nerve to reduce pain without destroying the nerve. As the nerve will recover, pain relief is temporary using this procedure but may provide relief for several weeks to months before returning.

Radiofrequency Neurotomy Treatments for Pain - A special needle is inserted beside the nerve that supplies sensory response - particularly at the facet and sacroiliac joints - and a radiofrequency signal is passed through the needle to cauterise the nerve to terminate the pain signals in the nerve. On average pain relief lasts between 9-12 months as the nerves grow back. Pain relief can sometimes last for 2 years.

What's involved

Patients must not eat for 6 hours before the procedure. Clear fluid is allowed until 2 hours before the procedure (200ml each hour maximum)

During the procedure, patients generally lie face down while skin is numbed with local anaesthetic before a small needle is inserted under x-ray guidance to the appropriate position. Medications are then injected and patients are closely monitored throughout. The procedure takes approximately 15 to 30 minutes. Most patients choose to be sedated for the procedure and consequently do not feel any pain.

Afterwards, patients may experience a period of numbness for a few hours. Most people have minor discomfort associated with the injection(s) which goes away after a few hours, although some people experience pain that requires medication for a day or two.

You must make arrangements to be collected after the procedure as you will not be able to drive yourself home.

Considerations

As with any procedure, there are risks and possible side effects or complications. If you have any concerns, contact your specialist to discuss. Your specialist will discuss all the possible side effects relevant to you before the procedure.

You must inform us if you:

- Are prone to excessive bleeding or taking blood thinning medication
- Have a systemic bacterial infection or local skin infection near the injection site
- Are diabetic
- Might be pregnant

After discharge, it's important to contact your local Emergency Department, GP or QPain in the event of:

- Bleeding, swelling or discharge at the site of the injection
- Increasing pain
- Noticeable changes in sensation or difficulty moving limbs
- Difficulty passing urine
- Fever or symptoms of systemic infection