



Radiofrequency (Neurotomy or Pulsed)

WHY HAVE THIS PROCEDURE?

By this stage you will have had one or more *diagnostic injections* helping us to locate where part/all of your pain is coming from.

A radiofrequency procedure aims to provide longer lasting pain relief between 3 months and 2 years. We apply heat (temperature) through a needle onto nerves. *Radiofrequency neurotomy* is high heat (90°C) used to desensitise the *medial branch* nerves to your facet joints, and *pulsed radiofrequency* is low heat (42°C) usually applied to other nerves.

This procedure can be repeated, usually with the same effects, if/when the pain returns.

BEFORE THE PROCEDURE

The procedure will be explained and discussed in detail including the benefits and risks. You will be asked to sign a consent form.

It is vital for us to be aware of any medications you take, any medical problems/conditions you have and any allergies.

Tell us if you take any blood thinning medication like warfarin or Plavix (clopidogrel). Aspirin is generally OK to take before your procedure, but best to check with us.

You must not eat or drink anything from the midnight before your procedure. This includes chewing gum.

On the morning of the procedure, take all your regular pain medications (with a sip of water). Don't change the doses or stop them before or after the procedure.

DURING THE PROCEDURE

Procedures are generally performed under 'light sedation', provided by an anaesthetist. They work closely with your pain specialists.

It is sometimes important to communicate with you throughout the procedure. *This is for your own safety.*

The skin is numbed (anaesthetised) with local anaesthetic, which might sting a bit. Your pain specialist will do everything possible to keep any discomfort to a minimum.

Once the needle is in position, we sometimes *test* if the needle is in the correct and *best* location according to strict criteria we use.

We use X-rays for most procedures. *If you are pregnant or could be pregnant, let us know.*

IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE PROCEDURE

You will be monitored in the recovery area & ward until it is safe for you to go home.

You may feel a bit drowsy if you had sedation.

Do not drive or operate dangerous machinery, look after children or drink any alcohol for 24 hours. This is for your own safety and those around you. Someone should take you home and take care of you overnight.

Our pain nurse will phone you a few days/weeks after the procedure.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS

All injections carry minor risks like discomfort, bleeding, bruising & skin infection.

Procedures can carry major risks that may include worsening of your pain, numbness, serious bleeding or infections.

There can be some very serious but rare side effects like temporary or permanent nerve damage, paralysis, toxic reactions or even life threatening allergic reactions.

If you have any questions or concerns please discuss this with your pain specialist & nurse before proceeding.

All procedures carry the risk of not helping to reduce your pain or can sometimes even worsen it.

Sometimes we use steroids (cortisone) in injections. Side effects of steroids might include worsening of your blood levels if you are diabetic & poor sleep.

REMEMBER

After some procedures your pain may *flare* and worsen for a short time after the procedure – for a few days or weeks. This can be expected. Ice packs and pain medications usually help this.

The following day you may return to your usual activities if you feel up to it.

It can take up to 6-8 weeks, sometimes longer, before the full benefits of the radiofrequency are felt.

You will be reviewed by your pain doctor or nurse a few weeks/months after the procedure.

If you experience these symptoms after a pain procedure, seek medical attention immediately (GP or ED):

- Feeling unwell in any way, like fevers or a high temperature.
- New or worsening back pain.
- Any numbness or pins and needles that you did not have before the procedure.
- Weakness in the legs or arms.
- Difficulty in passing urine.
- Any incontinence of urine or your bowels.