



Facet Nerve Rhizotomy/Radiofrequency Ablation

What is a Facet Nerve Rhizotomy:

A Facet Nerve Rhizotomy is a procedure whereby a needle is placed on the small nerves supplying sensation to the joints of the spine. After proper needle placement, the nerve is heated to produce a prolonged numbing effect by destroying the nerve. The purpose of the procedure is to reduce pain for an extended period of time (several months to years).

What are facet joints?

Facet joints are small joints found throughout the spine which enable movement. Like other joints in the body, these joints may become arthritic with aging.

Who can benefit from Facet Nerve Rhizotomy?

Patients with back and neck pain due to arthritis of the spine as well as certain types of headaches may benefit from Facet Nerve Rhizotomy. Prior to Facet Nerve Rhizotomy, facet nerve blocks are performed to determine whether these joints are the source of your pain.

How do Facet Nerve Rhizotomies help?

Facet Nerve Rhizotomies destroy small nerves which carry painful signals to the spinal cord. By destroying these nerves, pain caused by spinal arthritis can be reduced.

How often can these injections be given?

Your doctor will determine how many injections should be given based on your treatment response.

What are the possible side effects?

As with any procedure, a small number of patients may experience side effects, which will be explained in more detail by your doctor.

A few potential side effects are listed below, however, the vast majority of patients experience no side effects at all.

- Bleeding
- Infection
- Nerve damage (to nerves supplying strength and sensation to your arms and legs)
- Lack of relief
- Localized pain at the injection site

What if I am taking blood thinning medications? (Eg., Coumadin, Plavix, Ticlid, Aggrenox):

Coumadin must be stopped 5 days before your procedure and you must have some laboratory studies taken immediately before your procedure (Eg., PT, INR). Your doctor may ask you to stop other medications before your procedure as well.

Does the injection hurt?

The area is numbed with local anesthetic before the injection, thus most patients experience only moderate discomfort.

Will I have any restrictions?

You should take it easy on the day of an injection. Driving is generally not permitted on the day of a procedure. Otherwise no restrictions are present.