

INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR PROCEDURE

RHIZOTOMY OR RADIOFREQUENCY LESIONING

How we do the procedure

If you received temporary, significant pain relief after two diagnostic facet blocks, you are a candidate for **Facet Rhizotomy or Radiofrequency Lesioning** (destroying specific sensory nerves-not nerves that control movement). We cauterize the nerves with special needles connected to a Radionics 3C radiofrequency generator. The generator is used to make the tip of the needle heat up to about 85 degrees Centigrade (the temperature of really hot coffee!). By using our fluoroscope (x-ray) machine, we can precisely place the needles to ensure that there is the absolute minimum risk of harm to you. The nerves are tested at each stage of the procedure to ensure that sensory nerves are cauterized, not motor nerves. Paralysis, numbness, and weakness are avoided by performing this testing. The nerves that are destroyed may eventually grow back, but it may take 6 months -2 years. During this time we can make your problem a lot better by using physical therapy and medication to keep the pain from returning when the nerves do grow back. The procedure can be repeated in 6 months-2 years, if necessary.

What to expect

We will place an intravenous line to provide us with the ability to give you medicine to relax you. You will not be put to sleep for this procedure, because the doctor will be monitoring your response to his testing. He will numb the nerve with a local anesthetic before the radiofrequency lesioning. A long-acting steroid (NOT the kind that increases size in athletes) is injected as well to decrease any potential inflammation. You may have to return for this procedure several times in order to treat the entire pain area.

Risks

The risks include bleeding, infection and a reaction to any of the medications used for the procedure. We use sterile technique to avoid infections. If you are taking a "blood thinner" (anticoagulant), we will give you special instructions before the procedure to avoid excess bleeding. You could develop a burning sensation in the area of your injection. This is rare and temporary and can be treated with medication.

Safety Precautions

Since your ability to drive may be impaired for a few hours, we ask that you have someone drive you home.

Injected steroids occasionally cause nervousness, difficulty sleeping, a flushed feeling (like hot flashes), an increased appetite, and elevated blood sugar or a "moon face" (rounded face) for several days.