

Radiofrequency Rhizotomy

- **What is Radiofrequency Rhizotomy?**

Radiofrequency (RF) rhizotomy, or RF neurotomy, is a therapeutic procedure designed to decrease or eliminate pain symptoms within spinal facets.

- **What is the purpose of radiofrequency rhizotomy?**

RF rhizotomy help to decrease pain by interrupting the sensory nerve pathways using a temperature-monitored probe.

- **What patients are candidates for radiofrequency rhizotomy?**

Before patients can be scheduled for a RF rhizotomy procedure, they generally must undergo a series of facet injections and / or discography tests to verify the exact source of their symptoms. These tests may require several visits. Because RF has a very specific focus, when your symptoms arise from a number of sources, RF may not be an effective solution.

- **How is the procedure done? Is the procedure painful?**

Prior to the procedure an intravenous line (IV) will be started. You will be asked to lie flat on you stomach. You will be awake during the procedure because it is important for you to answer questions accurately during the entire procedure. The doctor will numb the areas with some local anesthetic. You will then feel a pressure sensation as the doctor inserts each needle into the correct locations. Once the needles are inserted, the doctor will test the sensory nerves of each target area and will ask you where you feel various sensations. The temperature probe will then be placed in each target location just long enough to interrupt the sensory nerve pathways. Then the doctor will inject some medication (local anesthetic and low-dose steroid) at each site before removing each needle. When the procedure is over you will be asked to lie down for 30 minutes on your back.

- **Are there any side effects?**

There are very small risks of bleeding or infections associated with this procedure. Increased discomfort for 1 – 2 weeks may occur. Numbness, tingling, or weakness in one or both extremities (arms or legs) may occur, but will wear off within a few hours.

- **How long does it take for the injection to work? How long does pain relief last?**

Pain relief benefits should be apparent within 2 – 4 weeks. It is not possible to predict to what extent, if any, this treatment will relieve your pain. Usually it provides long-term pain relief (i.e., 3 months or more), but the results vary with each individual.