

INFORMATION SHEET – RADIOFREQUENCY NEUROTOMY

Radiofrequency (RF) neurotomy of the facet joints is a treatment option for those patients who have had significant pain relief (generally greater than 80%) from injection of the facet joints or medial branch nerves, but the relief is temporary. The goal is to deaden the small nerves that give feeling to the joint, using heat from a special needle. Two nerves need to be treated per joint. These nerves cannot be seen with X-ray, but their location along the bone is fairly predictable. Thus, to be sure the RF lesion is made in the correct location, test blocks (also known as medial branch blocks) will be done using different freezing solutions. If significant pain relief is experienced, the patient is considered a good candidate for the RF neurotomy.

Procedure:

1. Your appointment will be booked at CAPRI Clinic - #1 – 6220 Hwy 2A Lacombe, AB where we have fluoroscopy x-ray equipment.
2. A local anesthetic, similar to dental freezing, will be used to numb your skin. You may breathe “laughing gas” (nitrous oxide) to help control your anxiety and pain during the RF if necessary.
3. Once the needle is positioned along the nerve that carries pain sensations from your facet joint, the area is frozen and an electrical current is applied to the needle to cause precise “burning” of the nerve.
4. You may experience a warm or hot sensation during the procedure. If you experience unbearable pain of the spine or a hot burning pain in your leg or arm when the nerve is being burned, please notify the doctor immediately. Most patients feel slight to moderate discomfort after the procedure.
5. The procedure takes approximately 1 hour to perform.
6. A ride home is recommended.

****Note**:** Prior to the procedure, let your doctor know if you have a **pacemaker, defibrillator or any other device implanted in you**, are or may be **pregnant**, or if you have an **infection, fever or chills**.

RISKS:

- A small percentage of people experience nerve pain in the region of the RF procedure. This usually improves over a matter of weeks. Arm or leg numbness or weakness is extremely unlikely. Those having RF at the C2/3 level of their neck often have a patch of numbness at the base of their skull and RF of the sacroiliac (SI) joint may result in a patch of skin numbness at the back of the buttock.
- You may experience increased pain after the procedure for up to 1 - 2 weeks. Keep in mind this is a minor surgical procedure and a certain amount of pain is expected. Have your family doctor provide you with appropriate medication to manage this pain.
- **If you think you are having a serious reaction or complication to the procedure, call the CAPRI Clinic during business hours or go to emergency. After hours, call the CAPRI Clinic emergency contact number 403-550-3447.** (Please do not call this number for booking inquiries or other non-emergency questions.)

Results:

- 60 - 80% of patients experience good to excellent pain relief for at least 8 - 18 months. The procedure can be repeated.
- A regular spine exercise program may improve the success of the procedure.
- You will be contacted by the CAPRI clinic ~3 months after your treatment to determine if there has been improvement in your pain, disability and quality of life. If that is not the outcome, we may schedule a follow-up appointment to re-evaluate your condition.

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