

How do I take care of myself at home?

- **Do not** take a bath, go swimming, or use a hot tub for the next 24 hours. You may shower any time.
- Remove the bandage(s) 24 hours after the procedure or if it becomes wet (i.e., if you take a shower).
- You may eat and drink as usual.
- If the injection site is painful, apply ice or a cold pack over the injection site no more than 15 minutes at a time, about two to three times each day as needed.
- You can take an anti-inflammatory such as ibuprofen, or medication that you normally take for pain.
- Avoid strenuous activity for 24 hours
- If you feel able to, you may return to work the next day.

When to get help

Contact your primary care provider or the pain program if you have:

- redness or swelling at the injection site(s)
- fever above 38.5°C (101°F)
- significant weakness and/or numbness in your leg(s)
- severe pain not controlled by your usual pain medicine or other ways you have managed your pain in the past

If your primary care provider is unavailable, go to the nearest emergency department.

Locations

Royal Jubilee Hospital
Memorial Pavilion 2nd floor
1952 Bay Street, Victoria

Tel: 250-519-1836

Central Island Pain Program
Nanaimo Regional General Hospital 2nd Floor
1200 Dufferin Crescent, Nanaimo

Tel: 250-739-5978



Island Health Pain Program Website:

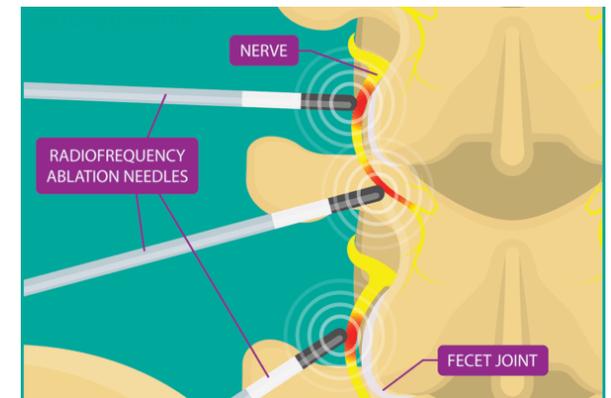


SCAN ME



Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA)

Pain Management Clinic



© Shutterstock

What is radiofrequency ablation?

Radiofrequency ablation is a procedure that uses high-frequency electrical current to heat up a small area of nerve tissue. This causes an interruption in danger signals and reduces pain in that area.

Why is a radiofrequency ablation done?

An RFA is used to reduce pain in your facet or sacroiliac joints in your lower back that have not responded to other treatments, and to provide longer term relief than nerve blocks or steroid injections.

Who will complete the procedure?

The physician will explain and complete the procedure, which takes about 30 minutes to complete.

Will I be asleep for this procedure?

- No, you are awake during the procedure.
- The physician uses local anesthetic (numbing medication) to treat the targeted area.

Can I bring a relative or friend?

Yes, a relative or friend can stay with you before and after the procedure. However, for safety reasons, they cannot be in the room with you during the procedure.

How do I prepare for this procedure?

- Wear loose comfortable clothing that is easy to remove, if needed.
- You may eat and drink, but restrict your intake to a light meal before your procedure.
- Unless instructed otherwise, **do not** stop taking your regular medications.
- Tell the physician and nurses if you have any allergies, such as local anesthetics.
- Tell the physician and nurses if you have a programmable implant, such as an implanted defibrillator (ICD) or spinal cord stimulator.

Please arrange for a responsible adult to drive or escort you home after the procedure, or else your procedure may be cancelled.

What happens during the procedure?

The area to be injected will be cleaned with antiseptic solution (that can be clear or pink in color)

A cold sticky pad (called a grounding pad) will be placed on your skin. This allows the electrical current to flow back into the radiofrequency machine.

The physician then:

- Injects numbing medicine (similar to dental freezing) into the skin over the area.
- Starts the ablation, heating up an area of nerve tissue. You may feel a buzzing or tingling sensation.
- Applies a small bandage to the needle site.

What happens after the procedure?

We move you to the recovery area to rest for about 20 minutes. You might feel some heaviness or numbness in your legs. We will check your muscle function and sensation before you leave.

Are there any complications or risks?

While complications are uncommon, no procedure is risk free. Potential complications include, but are not limited to:

- infection
- bleeding
- damage to tissue surrounding the injection site
- nerve damage

What should I expect after the procedure?

- Your back may feel numb, weak or itchy for a couple weeks.
- You might feel extra sore for one to four days.
- Pain relief usually develops 2 – 4 weeks after the procedure, however it can take up to 6 weeks to notice improvement. Over time, your pain may return as the nerves re-grow.