

## **RADIOFREQUENCY (RF) PROCEDURE**

### **Radiofrequency Description:**

Radiofrequency lesioning is a procedure used to reduce certain kinds of chronic pain by preventing transmission of pain signals. It is a safe procedure in which a portion of nerve tissue is heated to cause a long-lasting interruption in pain signals and reduce pain in that area. This technique is nicknamed the “RF” or “microwave” procedure.

Radiofrequency is used to treat several causes of back and neck pain such as facet joint disease, spinal stenosis, herniated disc disease, sacroiliac joint disease, and degenerative spine disease. The lumbar facet joints produce pain in the lower back, which may radiate to the hips and groin. The lumbar facet joints could produce pain when a patient sits or transitioning from a sitting to a standing position. The sacroiliac joints produce pain in the upper buttocks. The sacroiliac joints could produce pain when a patient sits or bends. The cervical facet joints produce pain in the neck. The cervical facet joints could produce pain when a patient bends and/or rotates the neck.

Patients who have received lumbar facet joint injections, cervical facet joint injections, and/or sacroiliac joint injections are often good candidates for radiofrequency lesioning. If you have just undergone these injections, Dr. Lefkowitz will need you to pay attention to how you feel within the next 24 hours. If you receive good pain relief from the injection, even for a few hours, and if the pain returns, you may be a candidate for the radiofrequency procedure. The radiofrequency procedure will cauterize the nerves that go to the joints (facet or sacroiliac) that are causing your pain.

### **How the procedure is performed:**

The radiofrequency lesioning is performed in a similar manner to previous pain management injections you have undergone in the procedure room. This procedure is performed as an outpatient, in-office procedure and takes between 5 to 10 minutes depending on how many, and which, nerves are being blocked.

Dr. Lefkowitz will use the fluoroscopy (X-ray) unit to locate the problematic area (lower back or neck) and direct the radiofrequency needle to the specific origin of pain. The doctor may stimulate the needle to ensure accurate placement. This may cause you to feel a buzzing / tingling / heaviness sensation. Patient involvement at this stage is essential to the procedure’s success. Once the needles are placed, electrical stimulation through the needle heats surrounding tissue, stunning the nerves and blocking them from sending pain signals.

After the procedure, the patient will rest in the recovery area until he/she is ready to go home. Once at home, rest for approximately one – two hours. The following day the patient can resume normal activities, including work; however, restrictions in place prior to the procedure may still apply.

### **What to expect following radiofrequency:**

If the procedure is successful, the pain relief can last up to 18 months (usually six to nine months). Most patients report longer-lasting relief than with cortisone injections.

With any procedure there are risks, side effects, and the possibility of complications. As with any soft tissue wound, you may experience discomfort such as muscular spasm, soreness, numbness, or burning, all of which should subside over the next several weeks.

Patients currently taking blood-thinning (anticoagulation) medications should inform Dr. Lefkowitz’s staff. There is no complication in taking this medication with performing radiofrequency lesioning; however, the staff should be aware.

### **Additional information:**

Please discuss any specific concerns with Dr. Lefkowitz.

For more information, please visit [www.lowbackpain.com](http://www.lowbackpain.com) or [www.spine-health.com](http://www.spine-health.com).