



RADIOFREQUENCY ABLATION

What is a facet joint and how is radiofrequency ablation of the medial branch nerve helpful?

Facet joints are small joints located in pairs on the back of the spine. Medial branch nerves are the very small nerve branches that communicate pain caused by these joints. If you have had a temporary response to an initial and a confirmatory medial branch block, then your physician may recommend a radiofrequency ablation for treatment. This procedure involves delivering a precise heat lesion or “burn” to the medial branch nerve so that it does not effectively transmit pain from the facet joint. This procedure is used to decrease pain and increase your function.

What happens during the procedure?

An IV may be started so that relaxation medication can be given. You will lie face down on a procedure table. The physician will use fluoroscopic (x-ray) guidance to visualize the spine. The physician will scrub your skin with sterile soap and place a drape on your back. The physician will numb an area of skin with anesthetic medication. After the anesthetic has been given time to be effective, the physician will then direct a special needle using fluoroscopic guidance towards the medial branch nerve. After the needle is in its proper location, your physician will inject a small amount of anesthetic medication and then “burn” the medial branch nerve for ninety seconds. This procedure may be repeated at one more levels depending on the location of your typical pain.

What happens after the procedure?

Immediately after the procedure, you will go to a recovery area where you will be monitored for approximately 15-30 minutes. Of note, depending on the area treated, the arm(s), chest wall, or legs(s) may feel weak or numb for up to several hours after the procedure. You will not be allowed to drive the day of the procedure.

General Pre-op and Post-op Instructions:

- You will be scheduled at one of the facilities listed below.
- You will be required to have a responsible adult drive you home.
- You should take your routine medications (ie. blood pressure, diabetic medications) the day of your procedure.
- If you are taking blood thinners and are having a *cervical* procedure, please notify the office immediately.
- You must not eat any food six hours prior to your appointment.
- You may have sips of clear liquids up to two hours prior to your appointment
- You may want to wear loose, comfortable clothing to your appointment.
- You may return to your normal activities the day after your procedure, including returning to work.

Location of Procedures:

- Desert Spine and Sports Phoenix office: 3700 N 24th Street, Ste 210. Phoenix, AZ 85016
- Desert Spine and Sports Mesa office: 6634 East Baseline Rd Suite 101, Mesa, AZ 85206
- Desert Spine and Sports Scottsdale office: 8670 E Shea Blvd Suite 102, Scottsdale AZ 85260

If you need to reschedule this appointment, please give 24 hours notice and call **602-840-0681**