

## Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA) - Neurotomy in the Lumbar Spine

### Overview

Radiofrequency ablation (RFA) uses heat from radio waves to treat the nerves in painful facet joints in your lumbar spine (low back). It is used when physical therapy, medications, or other treatments have not relieved the pain.

### Preparation

To begin, you lie on your stomach and are given relaxation medicine. Anesthesia numbs your skin and the tissues in your lower back. The surgeon guides a tube called a cannula into your spine, using a video x-ray device (fluoroscope) to ensure correct placement. The procedure will treat the medial branch nerves that carry pain signals from your lumbar facet joints to your brain.

### Treating the nerves

Next, the surgeon inserts an electrode through the cannula and down to these nerves. The surgeon tests the correct position with a weak jolt of energy to see if it recreates your pain. If so, the surgeon uses radio waves to heat the nerves. This radiofrequency ablation blocks the nerves' ability to carry pain signals to your brain. The surgeon may do this procedure for several areas of nerves.

### End of procedure

When the RFA procedure is finished, your skin is bandaged and you are discharged home after a brief period of monitoring. While you may feel sore at the site of the procedure, you should notice great nerve pain relief. Because nerve cells regenerate, you will likely have to repeat this procedure in the future.

