

Symptoms and causes of **facet joint pain**

Facet joints are common sources of chronic back and neck pain.^{6,8} Each vertebral body in your spine has three main points of movement: the intervertebral disc and the two facet points. These facet points are small, stabilizing joints located on either side of each vertebra and consist of bony knobs coated with a slippery cartilage. As a disc thins with aging and from daily wear and tear, the space between two spinal vertebrae shrinks, eroding the cartilage and causing painful friction. Fractures, torn ligaments and disc problems can all cause abnormal movement and alignment, putting extra stress on the facet joints.

Contact your physician if you're exhibiting any of these symptoms:

Lower back symptoms

- Pain or tenderness in the lower back
- Pain that increases with twisting at the waist or bending backward and extending the lower back
- Pain that moves to the buttocks and hips or the back of the thighs—usually a deep, dull ache
- Stiffness or difficulty with certain movements such as standing up straight or getting up out of a chair

Neck symptoms

- Difficulty rotating head
- Neck pain
- Headaches
- Shoulder pain

Understand what's causing your pain and **get back to living**

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Interventional Spine

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Radiofrequency ablation

When pain stops
life can resume



One in six Americans suffers from back pain every day¹

Radiofrequency ablation can give you quick, long-lasting relief.²⁻⁷

When pain stops, life can resume

Treating facet joint pain with radiofrequency ablation

Radiofrequency ablation (RFA) or lesioning is a minimally invasive procedure that provides lasting relief to those suffering from facet joint pain.⁷ In fact, clinical studies show that RFA significantly reduces pain severity and frequency for one year in the majority of patients.^{5,7}

RFA involves applying heat to certain nerve pathways to “shut off” the transmission of pain signals to the brain. It is performed on an outpatient basis. It has a high success rate^{5,7} and low complication rate.^{2,7,8}

Benefits of the procedure

- Longer-lasting pain relief compared to steroid injections⁸
- Low complication and morbidity rates^{2,7,8}
- Appreciable pain relief compared to surgery: nearly half of back pain sufferers are not helped by surgery⁹
- Greater range of motion²
- Lower use of analgesics^{2,5}
- Improved quality of life²
- Short recovery time⁵

The procedure and what you can expect

Before

Your doctor will confirm your diagnosis. If you are a good candidate, your doctor will ask you for the following information:

- current medications, including herbal supplements and their dosages
- known drug, iodine or latex allergies
- current health conditions

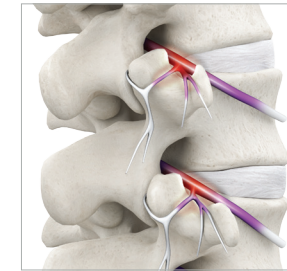
During

RFA happens while you’re awake, but sedated. First, local anesthetic numbs the treatment area. Then, your doctor inserts a needle and electrode. Finally, a high-frequency electrical current passes through the electrode, heating up and “lesioning” the sensory nerve.

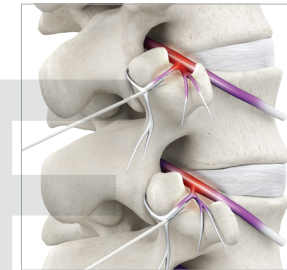
After

Patients typically go home within one to three hours. Some initial discomfort may immediately follow the procedure, but most patients resume work and normal activities between 24 and 36 hours. After a few days, you should feel a decrease in pain and continued improvement over the next several weeks. You can expect long-lasting pain relief, but since nerves repair themselves, the pain may return. If this happens, the procedure can be repeated.

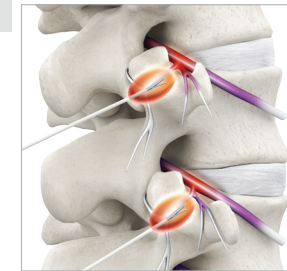
Procedure overview



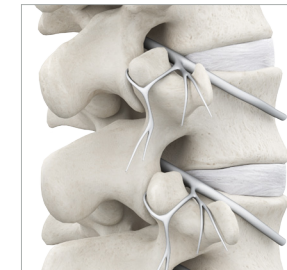
1 Facet joint with inflamed nervous tissue



2 Needles enter the treatment area



3 Radiofrequency current heats surrounding nerve tissue to create lesions



4 Facet joint with treated nervous tissue