



Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA)

Patient Information Sheet



What is Image-guided Radiofrequency Ablation?

Radiofrequency ablation (or RFA) is a procedure used to reduce pain. An electrical current produced by a radio wave is used to heat up a small area of nerve tissue, thereby decreasing pain signals from that specific area. RFA can be used for chronic (long-lasting) low-back and neck pain and pain related to the degeneration of joints from arthritis.



What does the procedure involve?

If you are an appropriate candidate for RFA, you will be booked for a bulk billed examination called a Medial Branch Block and a consultation with our radiologist. Local anaesthetic will be placed around the area that is suspected of causing your pain under guidance of a Computed Tomography (CT) scanner. The anaesthetic lasts for approximately 4-6 hours and is not a permanent pain management solution. You will need someone to drive you home as you may experience some weakness from the local anaesthetic. You will be given a Pain Diary to assess how your pain feels over the next 8 hours. Please complete this as accurately as possible and return it to your referring doctor. This procedure allows us to see if RFA will be beneficial for helping your pain or if we need to investigate further. Your referring doctor will discuss your results with you and if they are successful will provide you with a referral for the RFA procedure.



How long does pain relief from Radiofrequency Ablation last?

The degree of pain relief varies, depending on the cause and location of the pain. Pain relief from RFA can last from six to 12 months and in some cases, relief can last for years. More than 70% of patients treated with RFA experience pain relief.



What are the risks?

With all procedures piercing the skin, there is a small chance of infection or bleeding at the injection site. You may be required to stop blood thinners to reduce this risk. You may experience some discomfort after the local anaesthetic has worn off, however this should subside within a week.



What costs are involved?

Please contact us for pricing information.

Do I Need a Referral?

Yes. After receiving a referral from your GP you will be booked in by staff and asked a series of questions. We may also need to see your previous imaging. You can contact our friendly staff on 5430 3955.

