

This fact sheet relates to **Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA)**, a type of pain management procedure which is performed at Melbourne Radiology Clinic. The procedure is also known as **radiofrequency denervation (RFD), radiofrequency thermolysis and rhizolysis**.

By transmitting pulsations of heat to the site of discomfort via fine needle, Radiofrequency Ablation can reduce discomfort by disabling nerves responsible for transmitting pain signals. Depending on the location of the procedure, an ultrasound machine or Computed Tomography (CT) scanner will be used to guide the procedure.

Introduction

Radiofrequency ablation is commonly used to treat back pain and various soft tissue conditions, including facet joint pain, plantar fasciitis, Morton's neuroma, shoulder pain and post-operative neuromas.

Preparation

1. There is no specific preparation required.
2. We suggest those undergoing treatment via radiofrequency ablation attend with someone who can provide them with transport post-procedure.

Risks

Risks of interventional procedures are rare and include:

- **Infection:** most of these are minor (1-2%), however can be serious (<0.1%) requiring hospital admission, intravenous antibiotics and surgery.
- **Bleeding:** this is fortunately also rare and common in patients with bleeding disorders and on "blood thinning" medication.
- **Inadvertent nerve damage:** from incorrectly positioned needle trauma, or as a consequence of the above mentioned complications.

Procedure

Radiofrequency ablation at Melbourne Radiology Clinic is performed by a radiologist experienced in interventional procedures. The patient is placed in an appropriate position for the procedure, a diathermy pad is placed on the thigh (shaving may be required to ensure proper skin contact) and the injection site cleansed. Pain relief is achieved by injecting a local anaesthetic around the nerve that is responsible for the patient's pain. Once the nerve and area is anaesthetised (numbed), a fine needle is positioned in proximity to the nerve, with the position of which confirmed by imaging guidance (ultrasound or CT).

A thin probe is then passed through the needle, which is connected to a generator that results in radiofrequency energy passing through the probe, resulting in heating of the probe tip. The result of this heat is to destroy the targeted nerve and therefore disrupting the ability of the nerve to transmit pain signals. Finally, long term local anaesthetic and cortisone are injected around the treated nerve in order to minimise discomfort which may arise following the treatment. Treatment via RFA takes approximately 30 minutes. Further time spent at the clinic for post-procedure recovery may be suggested, depending on the exact nature of a patient's condition.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION TO TELL YOUR DOCTOR PRIOR TO TREATMENT

Serious side effects are rare, however if you have an existing condition, this must be discussed with your referring doctor before having treatment. People with local skin or systemic infections are at greater risk of having an infection spreading into the spine after spinal injection treatment. Therefore, if you have a skin infection, which may include wounds, boils or rashes, please tell your doctor or arrange to have the procedure performed at a later date.

Following the procedure

At most, you will feel some minor discomfort in the treated area. As local anaesthetic has been injected into the treated area, most patients will walk out of the clinic pain free. Patients are able to walk freely after the procedure and may need to rest in the clinic for observation. Following this, you may be discharged if you are feeling well. You should not drive for the rest of the day. The following day you may return to work and gradually increase your activities as tolerated as instructed by your doctor.

It may take a few weeks for pain relief to be achieved and in some patients, a repeat procedure may be required if symptom relief has not been successful. Even in the setting of a successful procedure where the nerve has been destroyed, some recovery of the nerve fibres and return of pain may occur following many months or years. Once again, a repeat procedure in this instance may be required.

Note:

Please discuss any medical illnesses with your doctor before booking the recommended procedure.

Follow up

The radiologist conducting the injection will send your referring doctor a report.

Please ensure that you make a follow up appointment with your referring doctor or health care provider to discuss your results.

REMEMBER ...

- Please bring to the clinic, any prior scans (eg. X-rays, ultrasounds, MRI, CT) and reports as these will assist the radiologist in assessing your condition.
- If you have any further queries please call Melbourne Radiology Clinic on (03) 9667 1667 – we are only too happy to help.
- Please note that any referral for a scan is valid at Melbourne Radiology Clinic, even if it has been written on a referral form from another radiology provider.

Whilst every effort is made to keep your appointment time, the special needs of complex cases, elderly and frail patients can cause unexpected delays. Your consideration and patience in these circumstances is appreciated.

[Updated: September 20, 2012



melbournerradiologyclinic

For All Appointments ph: 03 9667 1667

Melbourne Radiology Clinic
Ground Floor, 3-6 /100 Victoria Parade
East Melbourne VIC 3002

tel 9667 1667 fax 9667 1666
info@melbournerradiology.com.au
www.melbournerradiology.com.au