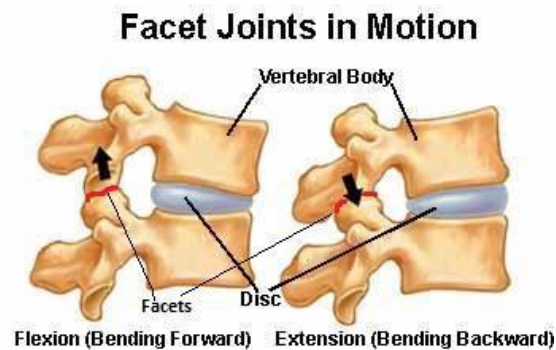


Cervical Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA)

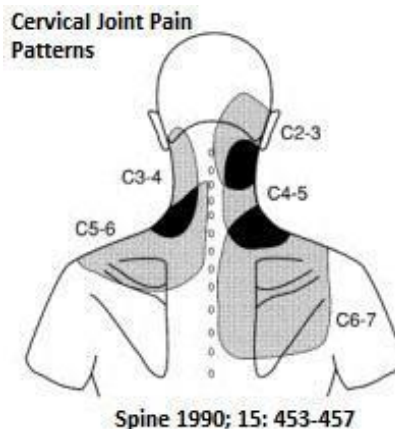
What is a facet joint pain?

The spine is made of vertebrae, which makes up the spine. The vertebrae are connected to each other with facet joints, which allows the bending and rotational spine movements. As the joints become inflamed and irritated, there is a small medial branch nerve that transmits the pain signal from the joint to the brain. Furthermore, spine pain may worsen during the extension of spine.



What are the indications of cervical radiofrequency ablation?

Among many indications the listed are the main indications: spondylosis, spondylolisthesis, arthritis, osteoarthritis, chronic headaches, neck pain, failed neck surgery syndrome. Furthermore, patient must have received temporary > 80% pain relief from the previous cervical medial branch blocks before they are considered candidate for the cervical RFA.



How does cervical radiofrequency ablation bring pain relief?

The pain is produced due to inflammation cervical facet joint which is transmitted via medial branch nerve to the central nervous system. By ablating the medial branch nerve via radiofrequency waves, this results in decreased neck pain caused by the facet joints. The success rate of cervical RFA is about 70%.

What are risks for the cervical medial branch block?

Among many, here are few listed rare side effects: increased pain, infection, bleeding, nerve damage, weakness, neuropathy, numbness and headache.

How is the cervical radiofrequency ablation performed?

After sterile preparation of the neck region, the injection site is localized under X-ray. Following the local anesthetic applied to the injection site, which can help decrease the injection site pain, and then the special radiofrequency needle is guided toward the target cervical facet joint with the help of X-ray. After the target is reached, the area is stimulated with to rule out any cervical nerve root involvement. Thereafter, small amount of local anesthetic with steroid is injected for **to minimize post-ablation procedure pain**, radiofrequency ablation is performed; and the needle is taken out at the end of the procedure.

What to expect after the cervical RFA?

This is an **outpatient procedure**. Patient should expect to receive full relief over the 10 day period. In some patients it may take up to 2 weeks for the full effect.

How long the relief from the cervical RFA would last for?

It varies from patient to patient. Usually, the data has shown the relief can last from 6-18 months.

Do the medial branch nerves ever grow back? And can the cervical RFA procedure repeated?

Yes, the medial branch nerves do grow back. Yes, the RFA can be repeated in order to achieve the previous pain relief. It is to be noted that the patient may have to repeat the cervical medial branch blocks to confirm the source of the pain in order to repeat the cervical RFA.

Please tell your pain physician if you are taking any blood thinners. For example: Coumadin, Plavix, Heparin, Lovenox and etc. The blood thinners need to be stopped before the interventional procedure, and the time frame will be prescribed by your pain physician.