

Radiofrequency treatment information

Why am I having radiofrequency treatment?

You will already have had facet joint injections that have suggested to your doctor that they may be the source of your pain. Radiofrequency treatment is a procedure which, by the application of heat, damages the nerves that allow you to feel the pain from these joints. If successful a similar pain relief to that which you experienced following your facet joint injections can be achieved. This can last for between 9-14 months.

What is radiofrequency treatment?

After numbing the skin, the doctor will insert a special radiofrequency needle alongside the nerve. This is done under X-ray to ensure that the needle is in exactly the right place. You may also feel some tingling and muscle twitching, but this is also to ensure that the position of the needle is correct. The nerve is numbed and then heated in order to destroy it. This process may be repeated for several nerves and usually takes between 30-90 minutes. There will be more than one injection for each joint.

What will I be able to do afterwards?

After 30-60 minutes you should be able to walk and then go home. Before you go we will ask you to describe your pain on a scale of 0-10. Do not drive or drink alcohol for twenty-four hours after the procedure. You should rest over the next 2-3 days but should be able to resume your normal level of after this and return to work. Your back or neck can be sore for the next week or two whilst the nerves die completely. Pain relief may therefore not occur for 2-3 weeks after your procedure as there may be some inflammation of the nerves.

It is important to realise that any relief obtained from this procedure should be used to gradually increase your activity levels. It is also important to realise that your own daily exercise programme is for life and stopping it may cause the pain and stiffness to eventually return.

Are there any risks involved?

There is an element of risk involved in all the procedures and treatments that you may have at the pain clinic. However you should remember that these risks are usually minimal. Your doctor will discuss these fully before your procedure and will be happy to answer all your questions.

Who should I contact if I need help afterwards?

You can contact the Pain Clinic on between 9-2pm, Monday to Friday.
Outwith these hours you should contact your GP or NHS 24.

Before you leave we will give you a letter for your GP which you should hand in to your surgery on the Monday after the procedure. If you need help over the weekend then take this letter with you so that the doctor will know what you have had done.