

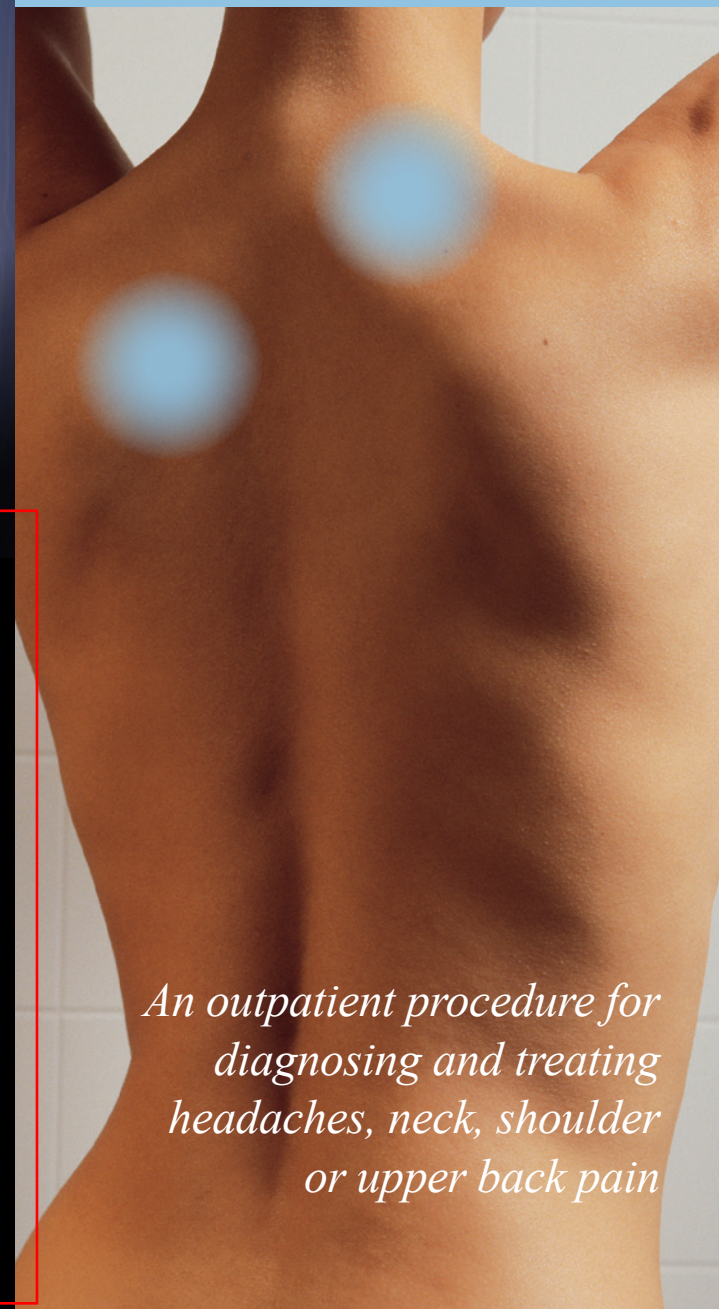
A CERVICAL RADIOFREQUENCY ABLATION (RFA) is an outpatient procedure for treating headaches, neck, shoulder and upper back pain. It is also called cervical facet thermal coagulation or rhizotomy. This information has been provided by your doctor so you can better understand this procedure. Your doctor will make the best recommendation for your specific needs.

This pamphlet is for general education only. Specific questions or concerns should always be directed to your doctor. Your doctor can explain possible risks or side effects.



CERVICAL RADIOFREQUENCY ABLATION (RFA)

for Chronic Neck Pain and Headache



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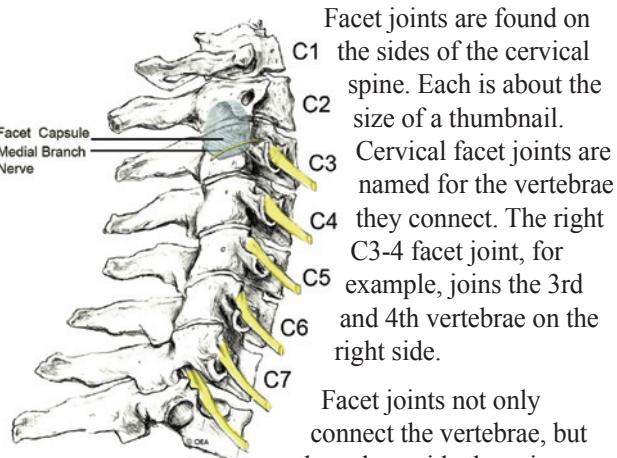
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An outpatient procedure for diagnosing and treating headaches, neck, shoulder or upper back pain

Cervical Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA) for Chronic Neck Pain and Headache

WHAT ARE CERVICAL FACET JOINTS?



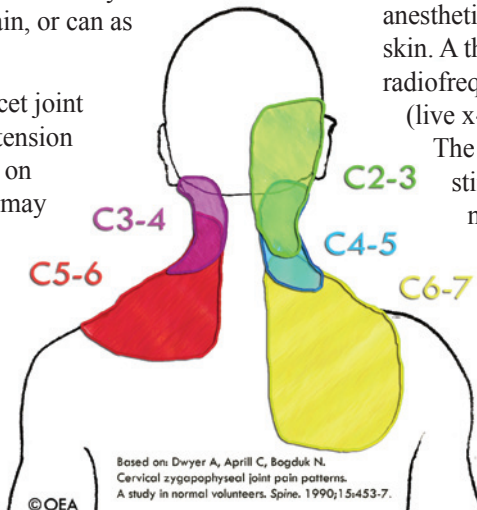
during movement. The joints allow your head and neck to flex, extend, and rotate, just as the other joints in our body allow us to do.

Medial branch nerves, located between the facet joints, transmit pain signals from the facet joints to your brain.

WHAT IS CERVICAL FACET JOINT PAIN?

Cervical facet joint pain is most commonly caused by arthritis, trauma, whiplash pain, or can be as simple as a sprain.

Pain from an injured cervical facet joint may range from simple muscle tension to more severe pain. Depending on which joint is affected, the pain may occur in an area from your head down to your shoulder blade. The diagram shows areas of pain usually associated with specific joints.

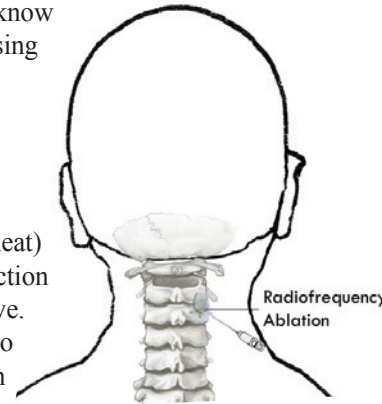


HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE CERVICAL FACET PAIN?

A diagnostic medial branch block identifies the facet joint as a source of neck pain. During this procedure the medial branch nerve, which transmits pain from the facet joint, is blocked with a numbing medicine. If the pain is reduced for the duration of the medication, then we know that the facet joint is causing the pain.

WHAT IS A CERVICAL RFA?

During this procedure, radiofrequency energy (heat) is used to disrupt the function of the medial branch nerve. This way the nerve can no longer transmit pain from the cervical facet joint.



WHAT HAPPENS DURING AN RFA?

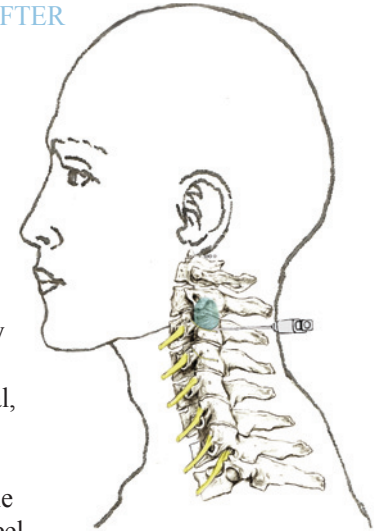
An anesthesiologist will be present so you have the option for sedation during the procedure. A local anesthetic (numbing medicine) is used to numb your skin. A thin needle that has a tip that transmits the radiofrequency energy is guided under fluoroscopic (live x-ray) guidance to the location of the nerve.

The needle tip can then transmit a signal which stimulates the nerve so we know we are on the nerve. At this point you may feel tingling in the neck or muscle twitching which is expected.

With the needle in the correct position, the area will be numbed. The doctor will then use radiofrequency energy to disrupt the nerve, which will stop the transmission of pain from the joint to the brain.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER AN RFA?

You will be monitored for up to 30 minutes after the procedure. Before you leave the office will supply you with discharge instructions. You may feel sore for a day or two and this is normal, and may be caused by muscle and nerve irritation. It is possible that your neck may feel numb, weak, sunburned, or itchy for a couple of weeks and this will resolve. Be patient as full pain relief may take up to two to three weeks.



HOW LONG CAN I EXPECT PAIN RELIEF?

Studies indicate that pain relief can be expected for 6-9 months, however this number varies between each individual and their underlying pathology. Over this time the nerves may regenerate, and if the pain returns the radiofrequency procedure can be repeated.

