

Cooled Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA) for Knee Replacement Surgery

You are scheduled for cooled radiofrequency (RAY-dee-oh-FREE-kwen-see) ablation before knee replacement. Nerves treated with cooled RFA cannot carry pain signals to the brain. Goals of this procedure are to:

- Help with pain after surgery
- Improve the physical therapy results with your new knee

This method can decrease or relieve knee pain before and after a total knee replacement. Treatment will be done 3 to 6 weeks before your knee surgery. It takes at least 2 weeks to see the full benefit of the treatment.

Risks

- Infection
- Increased pain
- Treatment failure
- Bleeding
- Nerve irritation or damage
- Allergic reaction to the medicine

Benefits

- Reduced pain prior to the total knee replacement
- Reduced pain after surgery that will help with physical therapy
- Reduced need for pain medicine after the total knee replacement

Alternatives

- Keep using medicine for pain (ibuprofen and others)
- Change your routine to things that do not cause pain

How to Prepare

Tell your doctor if you:

- Take a blood thinner or anticoagulant medicine
- Might be pregnant
- Have had recent changes in your health such as:
 - New chest pain
 - Shortness of breath
 - Feeling dizzy

- Have an infection
- Take antibiotics for an infection
- Become ill before the treatment
- Have an implanted stimulator or cardiac pacemaker or defibrillator.
If you have a stimulator, bring your handheld remote.

Arrange for someone to drive you home. After the procedure, **you will not be able to drive**. Your driver **must** stay at Gundersen during your treatment.

Eat a meal before you arrive. Bring a book, phone or tablet – something to do while medicine we give you to relax and feel sleepy takes effect. Bring a pair of shorts or we will provide a gown.

During treatment

You will lie on your back. Your skin will be cleaned with special soap and antiseptic. This is to reduce the chance of infection. Medicine to numb the area is given through a needle. This numbing medicine may burn and sting.

After skin is numb, the doctor will insert a needle-like tool. Its tip heats up. The doctor guides it with a special X-ray called a fluoroscope (FLOR-o-skohp). You may feel a tingle or pressure each time a nerve is treated. Treatment takes about 30 minutes most of the time. It depends on the number of nerves treated. Three nerves are treated most often.

After treatment

You will go to the recovery area. Ice can be placed on the needle entry sites. You will have something to drink and rest. Staff will let you know when you may leave.

You may feel numb or weak at the places where the needles entered your skin. You may also have some discomfort in these areas. This is normal and will go away over the next few days.

While you recover

The pills we give you can make you dizzy, light-headed and sleepy. Walk with care so you do not fall. **Do not drive for 3 to 4 hours after your treatment.**

Your legs may feel weak or numb from the numbing medicine. You may not notice this until you try to stand or walk. Do not walk if your legs are weak. Stay seated until the numbness or weakness goes away. This may take up to an hour.

Take it easy for the rest of the day. Do not do anything that makes you move fast like sports or housework. Feel free to ask your doctor or nurse what things are safe.

You may shower. **Do not** use a bathtub, hot tub or whirlpool for 2 days.

You may have clear drainage from one or more of the treatment sites. This is normal and will resolve with time. Replace your bandage as needed if it gets soaked.

You may apply an ice pack over the needle sites for 20 minutes. This can be done 3 to 4 times during the first 24 hours.

You may use over-the-counter medicines for any discomfort at the needle sites.

Take your usual medicine unless your doctor tells you to do something else.

Contact information

Call and ask for a nurse who works with your doctor if you have questions or any of these problems:

- Fever of 101° F or higher
- Redness, swelling or warmer skin where you were treated
- Drainage or odor at needle entry sites
- Increased pain or weakness

8:30-4:30 p.m. weekdays - Neurosciences: (608) 775-9000 or (800) 362-9567, ext. 59000

After hours, weekends and holidays

Telephone Nurse Advisor: (608) 775-4454 or (800) 858-1050

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