

Cooled Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA) for the Hip or Knee

Nerves burned during cooled radiofrequency ablation (RAY-dee-oh-FREE-kwen-see ah-BLAY-shun) can no longer send pain signals to the brain. RFA can relieve pain in joints and other body parts. It can take 2 to 3 weeks for full benefits to be felt. This treatment is counted as a success if pain is reduced by half. Most people get pain relief for one year. Some patients have longer pain relief and some have shorter pain relief. This treatment can be repeated.

Risks

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

Benefits

- Longer periods of reduced pain

Alternatives

- Physical therapy
- Change routine to things that do not cause pain
- Keep using medicine for pain
- Surgery

How to prepare

Tell your doctor if you:

- Take a blood thinner
- Are 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 injection

- 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.

Before a hip procedure, you will be told how to prepare for IV sedation.

For a knee procedure, pills will help you relax. Eat a meal before you arrive. Bring a book or phone/tablet to use while waiting for pills we will give you to take effect. Bring a pair of shorts or we will provide a gown.

During treatment

You will lie on your back. Skin will be cleaned and covered with a sterile cover. Medicine given through a needle will numb the site. This medicine may briefly 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.

After treatment

In the recovery area, ice can be placed on needle entry sites. You will have something to drink and rest. Staff will tell you when you may leave. You may feel numb or weak 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

Pills or sedation 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 treatment.**

- **If you were sedated, do not drive until 6 a.m. the next day.**

After knee RFA, legs may feel weak or numb for as long as **1 hour**. You may not notice this until you try to stand or walk. **Do not** walk if your legs are weak. Stay seated until they no longer feel weak or numb. Pills you

given may make you dizzy, light-headed and sleepy. Be careful when you walk so you do not fall.

After hip RFA, legs may feel weak or numb for as long as **12 hours**. You may not notice this until you try to stand or walk. **Do not walk** if legs are weak. Stay seated until they no longer feel weak or numb. Make sure you have a safe way to enter your home. Get help from your family or a caregiver. Use a walker or wheelchair.

Take it easy for the rest of the day. Avoid housework, sports or activities that require fast movement. Do not lift more than 10 pounds (about what 1 gallon of milk weighs). Ask your doctor or nurse what activities 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 sites. This is normal and will resolve with time. Replace your bandage with a new one if needed.

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.

Take your regular 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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