

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.



(C) Copyright OEA For OEA website use only

This region is blank on the printed brochures allowing you to place your business card label here. This area can also be customized with your clinic information. See the customized brochures tab on the OEA website: www.oebrochures.com

CERVICAL RADIOFREQUENCY ABLATION (RFA)

for Chronic Neck Pain and Headache



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

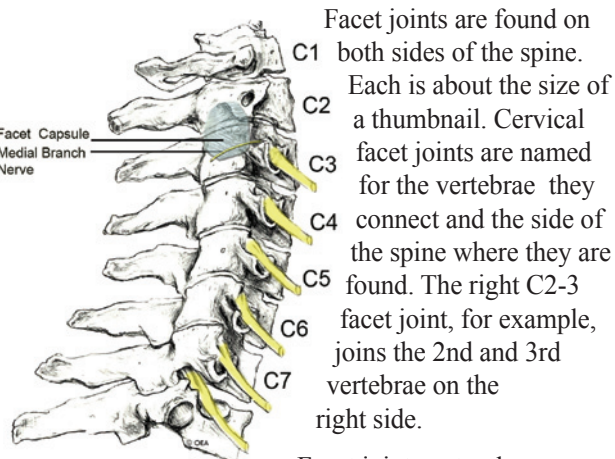


OEA PAIN BROCHURES
www.oebrochures.com

Copyright © 2005-2009 OEA, LLC. INV-0709

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

WHAT ARE CERVICAL FACET JOINTS?



Facet joints are found on both sides of the spine. Each is about the size of a thumbnail. Cervical facet joints are named for the vertebrae they connect and the side of the spine where they are found. The right C2-3 facet joint, for example, joins the 2nd and 3rd vertebrae on the right side.

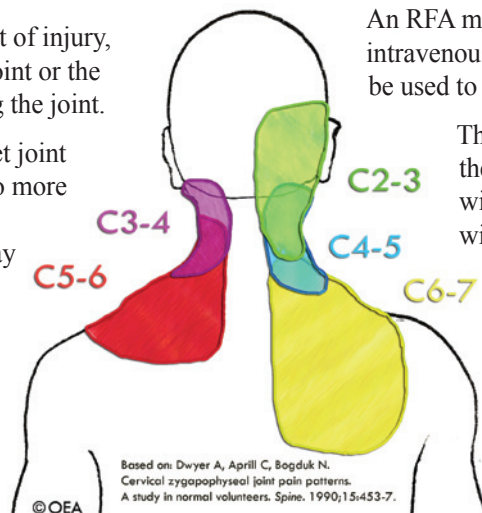
Facet joints not only connect the vertebrae, but they also guide the spine during movement.

Medial branch nerves, located near facet joints, communicate pain from the facet joints. In other words, these nerves tell the brain when a facet joint has been injured.

WHAT IS CERVICAL FACET JOINT PAIN?

Cervical facet joint pain is a result of injury, either to the cartilage inside the joint or the connecting ligaments surrounding the joint.

Pain from an injured cervical facet joint may range from muscle tension to more severe pain. Depending on which facet 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.



Based on: Dwyer A, Aprill C, Bogduk N. Cervical zygapophyseal joint pain patterns. A study in normal volunteers. Spine. 1990;15:453-7.

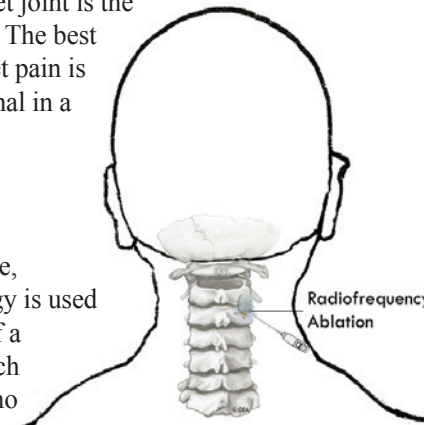
HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE CERVICAL FACET PAIN?

If you have pain in one or more of these areas, and it has lasted longer than two months, you may have cervical facet pain.

Common tests such as x-rays or MRIs may not always show if a facet joint is the reason for your pain. The best way to diagnose facet pain is to block the pain signal in a medial branch nerve.

WHAT IS A CERVICAL RFA?

During this procedure, radiofrequency energy is used to disrupt function of a cervical medial branch nerve, so that it can no longer transmit pain signals from an injured facet joint.



WHAT HAPPENS DURING AN RFA?

An RFA may start with an IV (medicine given intravenously) to help you relax. A local anesthetic may be used to numb your skin.

The doctor will then insert a thin needle near the facet joint. Fluoroscopy, a type of x-ray, will be used to position the needle. The doctor will then check that the needle is in the proper position by stimulating the nerve.

This may cause muscle twitching and provoke some of your pain.

With the needle in the correct position, the area will be numbed. Your doctor will then use radiofrequency energy to disrupt the medial branch nerve.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER AN RFA?

You will be monitored for up to 30 minutes after the injection. Before you leave, the clinic will give you discharge instructions as well as a pain diary. Keeping track of your pain helps the doctor know what the next step will be.

You may feel sore for one to four days. This is normal, and may be caused by muscle and nerve irritation. Your neck or upper back may feel numb, weak, or itchy for a couple of weeks. Be patient, as full pain relief normally takes two to three weeks.

HOW LONG CAN I EXPECT PAIN RELIEF?

Nerves regenerate after an RFA, but how long this takes varies. Your pain may or may not return when the nerves regenerate. If it does, another RFA can be done.

