Hours of Operation
Monday–Thursday,
8 a.m.–5 p.m.
Friday,
8 a.m.–4 p.m.

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Radiofrequency (RF) Neurotomy

What is radiofrequency (RF) neurotomy?
RF is a procedure that decreases or eliminates pain from the spinal facet joints. It typically provides more long-term pain relief than anesthetic injections alone.

What is the purpose of RF?
Using a machine called a radiofrequency generator, RF can produce relief by interrupting the sensory nerve pathways. The RF uses the instrument to generate a radio wave through a needle that is placed onto the nerve. The wave causes the nerve to have its electrical transmission interrupted.

Who is a candidate for RF?
Before you can be scheduled for the procedure, you will undergo a series of facet injections to verify the exact source of your symptoms. These tests may require several visits. Because the assessment of your specific pain is very focused, RF may not be an effective solution.

How is the procedure performed?
You will be given light conscious sedation through an IV (intravenous needle) inserted in your arm or hand upon your admission, and then escorted to the surgical suite and asked to lie on your stomach for the procedure. The doctor and nurse will monitor your blood pressure, heart and breathing during the procedure. The physician will perform the RF by placing the needle in your back along the location of your pain sites. The RF needles will be placed through the insertion needles and the machine programmed for your treatment. The physician usually will inject a small amount of local anesthetic medication through the needles before removing them from your back.

Is the procedure painful?
Typically the sedation makes the procedure far less painful, although some physicians will stimulate electrically during the procedure in order to optimize the nerve destruction. The stimulation along with the RF may be mildly uncomfortable.

What are the risks and side effects?
The most common risks are local pain from the needles and neurectomy (.5%); and neuritis, a mild to moderate burning sensation in the leg that usually lasts about two to four weeks. More serious but extremely rare are risks of bleeding, infection, nerve injury, paralysis or weakness in the lower extremities.