SpinePain SOLUTIONS

**Bay Shore**
340 Howells Road
Suite B
Bay Shore, NY 11706

**Commack**
66 Commack Rd
Suite 103
Commack, NY 11725

**Farmingdale**
85 Conklin Street
Farmingdale, NY 11735

631-310-0000
SpinePainSolutions.com

# Post-Procedure Instructions: Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA)

**After your procedure**

SpinePain Solutions · Patient handout

**Follow any specific instructions your care team gives you.** These instructions do not replace advice from Dr. Sharma or your SpinePain Solutions care team. Follow any personalized instructions you were given at discharge. If something on this sheet conflicts with what you were told, follow your care team's directions and call the office.

## Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room if you have:

- Chest pain, trouble breathing, or coughing up blood.
- New or worsening weakness in your arms or legs, or you cannot walk or stand (after the numbing medicine has worn off).
- New trouble controlling your bladder or bowels, or new numbness in the groin, buttocks, or inner thighs.
- Confusion, fainting, or a sudden, severe headache.
- Bleeding from the procedure site that does not stop after 10 minutes of firm pressure.

## Call the office right away at 631-310-0000 if you have:

- A temperature of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or shaking chills.
- Redness, warmth, or swelling around the procedure site that is getting worse, or drainage that is cloudy, yellow-green, or bad-smelling.
- Clear, watery fluid leaking from the procedure site, or a headache that gets worse when you sit or stand up and better when you lie down.
- Pain that keeps getting worse, new sudden severe back pain, or pain that your medicine does not control.
- Pain, swelling, or redness in one calf or leg.
- New tingling or numbness that is spreading.

If you cannot reach the office and you are worried, go to the nearest emergency room.

## What was done

You had radiofrequency ablation (RFA), also called radiofrequency neurotomy. This uses carefully controlled heat to quiet the nerves that carry pain from a joint, often a facet joint after helpful medial branch blocks. RFA does not remove arthritis or destroy the joint. The nerves can recover over time, and relief is not guaranteed.

## What to expect in the first 24-48 hours

Most people go home the same day when it is medically appropriate.

- Rest that day. Mild aching at the needle sites is common. This is different from a new spinal injury pattern.
- Temporary relief from numbing medicine may wear off, and then soreness can be more noticeable.
- If you received sedation, you may feel tired or unsteady. A responsible adult should take you home.

## What to expect over the first weeks

In the first days to about a week, soreness, muscle spasm, or a mild sunburn-like feeling near the treated area is common. A short pain flare can happen while the treated nerves settle. Some people notice early improvement. Others feel worse before they feel better.

A different burning, raw, tingling, or very touch-sensitive feeling can also occur. This is sometimes called post-ablation neuritis. It is different from a deep bruise or muscle ache at the needle sites. It may start in the days after treatment, or become more noticeable after the first soreness starts to improve. A waistband, shirt, or shower water may feel uncomfortable on the skin. This does not prove that the procedure worked, and it does not prove that it failed. Many cases are temporary. Published reports describe many cases lasting from several days to a few weeks, but the duration varies. If the treated area is in the upper neck, these feelings can sometimes last longer.

Call the office if this burning pain is severe, keeps getting worse, lasts longer than you were told to expect, or comes with weakness, spreading numbness, fever, drainage, or another new neurologic change. Do not assume every new symptom is ordinary neuritis.

Some people feel better within days. Clearer benefit often takes up to about 3 to 6 weeks as the treated nerves settle. Weeks 2 to 3 are when many people first judge whether RFA helped.

## Activity and lifting

Rest that day. Light activity usually returns first. Heavier work waits on advice from your clinician. There is no single day count that fits every job and every person. Your written instructions come first.

Avoid strenuous exercise and heavy lifting until your team says they are safe.

## Dressing and bathing

Follow the discharge instructions from the treating facility.

If the skin over the treated area is very sensitive, shower water or clothing may feel uncomfortable. That can happen with post-ablation neuritis.

You may usually take off a small bandage the evening of the procedure or the next morning, then shower. Pat the site dry. Do not scrub it. No baths, pools, or hot tubs until the skin has closed, often about 24 hours, or until your team says it is safe. Do not put lotion, cream, or ointment on the site unless you were told to.

## Medicines, ice and heat

Ice for about 20 minutes at a time can ease local soreness. Use a thin cloth between the ice and your skin. Keep any dressing dry.

Ordinary soreness may improve with rest, ice, and an anti-inflammatory medicine when that is medically appropriate for you. Do not start or change a medicine only because of general advice.

Mild burning or touch-sensitive symptoms may improve without a prescription. If those symptoms are more than mild, call the office so a plan can be chosen for you. Do not start a new prescription on your own.

Continue your usual home medicines unless you were told to hold something.

Do not stop a blood thinner on your own. Restart blood thinners only as directed by your provider.

For soreness, acetaminophen (Tylenol) or an anti-inflammatory may be used if it is safe for you - ask if you are unsure. Take any prescribed pain medicine exactly as directed.

Avoid heat on the procedure site for the first 2 days unless your discharge sheet says otherwise.

## Driving and work

If sedation was used, plan for someone else to drive you home that day. Even without sedation, do not drive if you feel unsafe. Ask your team for the plan that fits your procedure.

Return to work is usually staged. Desk work may return sooner than heavy lifting. Follow the written instructions from your clinician rather than a universal day count.

## Follow-up

Call SpinePain Solutions at **631-310-0000** if you do not already have a follow-up visit.

Many people are seen in about 3 to 6 weeks, when the result is often clearer. Call sooner if you have concerns. Bring questions about activity, work, and physical therapy to that visit.

### Questions or concerns?

Please contact us through **Klara** or the **patient portal**.
You can also text us at **631-310-0000**, or call **631-310-0000**.
Website: **SpinePainSolutions.com**

Scan to open your patient portal

SpinePain Solutions · Dr. Amit Sharma · Bay Shore / Commack / Farmingdale · Phone: **631-310-0000**. These instructions do not replace advice from Dr. Sharma or your SpinePain Solutions care team.

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