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## Cancer Health Center

### Radiofrequency Ablation for Chronic Pain - What is radiofrequency ablation?

Radiofrequency ablation of nerves is a procedure that may be used to reduce certain kinds of [chronic pain](#) by preventing transmission of pain signals. It is a safe procedure in which a portion of nerve tissue is heated to cause an interruption in pain signals and reduce pain in that area. This procedure is sometimes called radiofrequency lesioning.

Your doctor will first identify the nerve or nerves that are sending pain signals to your [brain](#). You will have a test that uses a [nerve block](#), which numbs specific nerves, to help your doctor find the nerves that are causing your pain.

You may have X-rays to pinpoint where to direct the radiofrequency probe. After you receive a [local anesthetic](#), the doctor places an instrument under your [skin](#) through which electrical stimulation heats the surrounding tissue. This may cause you to feel a buzzing or tingling sensation. The heat "stuns" your nerves, blocking them from sending pain signals to your brain. But the nerve often tries to grow back. If it does, the results are only temporary and usually last for around 6 to 9 months.

This procedure is done in an operating room and takes between 20 minutes to 1 hour or longer depending on how many, and which, nerves are being blocked. If the nerve that is blocked is not the nerve that is causing the pain, your pain will not be reduced.

Radiofrequency ablation is not effective for everyone. If you have not responded well to other treatment, such as diagnostic local anesthesia nerve blocks, radiofrequency ablation will probably not work for you.

#### Recommended Related to Pain Management

##### [Prescription Drug Abuse: Who Gets Addicted and Why?](#)

No one decides to get addicted to prescription pain pills. Alienating family and friends, failing at work, and launching a small-time criminal career aren't what anyone plans on when they swallow their first Vicodin. One in five Americans report misusing a prescription drug at least once in their lifetime, but the overwhelming majority put the pills away with no lasting harm. So how does prescription painkiller abuse progress to full-blown opioid addiction? "It's clear that some people have..."

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