

# RADIOFREQUENCY ABLATION



**LVI**

LAKELAND VASCULAR

INSTITUTE



## PREPARATION for the procedure

- Do not eat solid food for at least 6 hours prior to the procedure. It is alright to have clear liquids up until 2 hours prior to the procedure.
- Medications for other medical conditions (heart disease, high blood pressure, etc...) can be taken with a small sip of water the morning of the procedure.
- Please let the pain management staff know if you are on any blood thinners medications prior to scheduling the procedure. These medications will need to be stopped prior to the procedure with approval of the prescribing physician.
- Do not take pain medication on the day prior to your procedure. If you are on opiate medications, please ask your pain physician the proper schedule you should take them.

## **What is Radiofrequency Ablation?**

The radiofrequency procedure involves using radio waves to create an electric current and heat. The heat produced by the current “stuns” the nerves that innervate the small joints of the spine which can cause pain. Performing radiofrequency ablation can provide you with significant, long lasting pain relief.

## **Before the Procedure**

You will have an evaluation by a staff physician. The procedure will be explained in detail, including the possible complications and side effects. All of your questions will be answered prior to the procedure.

- Diabetic medication will need to be adjusted the day of your procedure. Diabetics who use insulin must modify their insulin dose the day of the procedure because your blood sugar may be affected since you will not have eaten for at least six hours. You can direct any questions or concerns about this to your primary care doctor.
- Bring all your medications with you, so you can continue to take them as usual after the procedure. Do not discontinue any medications without consulting your primary medical doctor.
- You will need to inform the staff of any allergies to medications, x-ray dyes, seafood, shellfish or latex.
- You will need someone to drive you home after the procedure since mild sedation medication may be given by intravenous line. Also, driving or operating any heavy machinery should be avoided until the day after the procedure.

# RADIOFREQUENCY ABLATION

## **PROCEDURE DAY**

An IV (intravenous line) may be placed to provide medication to help you relax if needed and for administering fluids. You will be placed prone on the operating table or in another position as deemed appropriate by your physician. Your heart rate, blood pressure and oxygen will be monitored. The skin over the target nerve(s) will be washed with sterile scrub and X-ray images (fluoroscopy) will be taken. After numbing of the skin with a local anesthetic, X-ray imaging is used for proper location of a small needle near the target nerve(s). Once the needle placement is confirmed with X-ray, a stimulating electrode will be used to stimulate the target nerve(s). Patient interaction is very important during the stimulation. You will be asked about various sensations and the area where you feel them. This part of the exam will help your doctor determine if the needles are in the correct location for the treatment. Once adequate needle placement is confirmed, heating of the nerve is then performed. Usually a radiofrequency ablation procedure takes about 30-40 minutes to complete.

## **WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER THE PROCEDURE**

You will remain in the recovery room for 30-60 minutes for observation. You will be offered a snack and the nurse will check your vital signs. Discharge instructions will be given by the nursing staff and you must have an adult drive you home. It is important to record your pain relief and duration of relief after the procedure.

## **DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS**

- Avoid driving or operating any heavy machinery until the day after the procedure.
- You should resume any medications and your regular diet after the procedure.
- You may resume regular daily activity but should avoid strenuous activity the day of the procedure.
- A shower may be taken but baths should be avoided on the day of the procedure.
- If any bandages are over the needle sites, they can be removed the evening after the procedure.

## **COMPLICATIONS**

Complications are rare with the most common being temporary increased pain near the injection site. You can apply ice to the affected area on the day of the procedure. If the discomfort persists, apply moist heat to the area. Serious complications are very uncommon but may include bleeding, infection or nerve damage. If pain increases contact your pain doctor. If you experience severe pain, fever, redness, swelling near the injection site or shortness of breath, have someone take you to the nearest emergency room to be evaluated for procedure complications or infection.

## **EXPECTATIONS**

Radiofrequency ablation may relieve the pain for weeks to months given appropriate response to earlier blocks. Expect to resume normal activities or resume work the day after the procedure.



## **Rekha R. Suthar, MD, MPH**

Specialty: *Interventional Pain Management*

Dr. Suthar has received specialized training in interventional pain management, having completed her fellowship at University Hospitals Cleveland Medical Center/Case Western Reserve University.

Prior to that, she completed an anesthesiology residency and a general surgery preliminary residency at Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami, FL. She was also a clinical researcher and a part of multidisciplinary team at Florida International University and University of Miami, evaluating liver cancer patients for surgical or interventional radiology management.

Prior to joining LVI, she treated patients with chronic pain using a full spectrum of interventional pain management procedures at University Hospitals-Cleveland Medical Center. She is board eligible with the American Board of Anesthesiology and the American Board of Pain Medicine.

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