

PATIENT EDUCATION

Rhizotomy

What is a rhizotomy?

A rhizotomy is a procedure that is used to prevent sensory nerves from sending pain messages to the brain by heating the nerve with a radiowave.

How does a rhizotomy work?

When the spine is injured, diseased, degenerated, or surgically treated, the facet joints may be affected. These joints frequently become arthritic and painful. The resulting symptoms in the low back are typically back pain which mainly stays in the back but may radiate into the legs, buttocks, hips, or to just above the knee. Pain and stiffness of the lower back is also noted, and leaning forward slightly may make the pain better. Pain and stiffness is common in the upper back and neck as well, and may produce headaches. This treatment is used to relieve the pain in the facet and/or sacroiliac joint.

How is a rhizotomy performed?

A rhizotomy is performed in the procedure room using fluoroscopy (x-ray). Sedation may or may not be used for this procedure. The patient is positioned on the fluoroscopy table, and the joints to be treated are identified. The skin is numbed where the joints will be treated. A needle is placed in the correct position. Then a small wire is inserted into the needle adjacent to the joint nerve. With the wire in proper position, a radiofrequency wave is applied which heats the tissue and destroys the joint nerve.

What are the potential risks?

As with any invasive procedure, there is the risk of infection and bleeding at the injection site. Very rarely nerve damage may occur.

what you need to know

What are the expected benefits?

Pain relief is usually delayed after a rhizotomy. It may take up to four weeks to fully evaluate the benefit

of the procedure. In some cases the pain may be worse for the first 1-2 weeks following the procedure. Generally, ice applied to the area is helpful.

These procedures are most effective when combined with other methods to control pain, including physical therapy, medication management, weight loss, smoking cessation, and other interventions.



How do I prepare?

You should continue with all therapies and medications prescribed by your doctor. If you are on a blood thinner, you may need to discontinue it prior to the procedure. We will discuss this with you before your injection.

No food or drink after midnight.

Please register at the front lobby reception desk when you arrive. A member of the hospital staff will escort you from there. Plan to spend about two hours at the hospital, and make sure to have someone available to drive you home.

Same Day Surgery will call you with a date and time for your procedure. Typically, injections are scheduled on Monday and Fridays.



Orange City Area
Health System

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