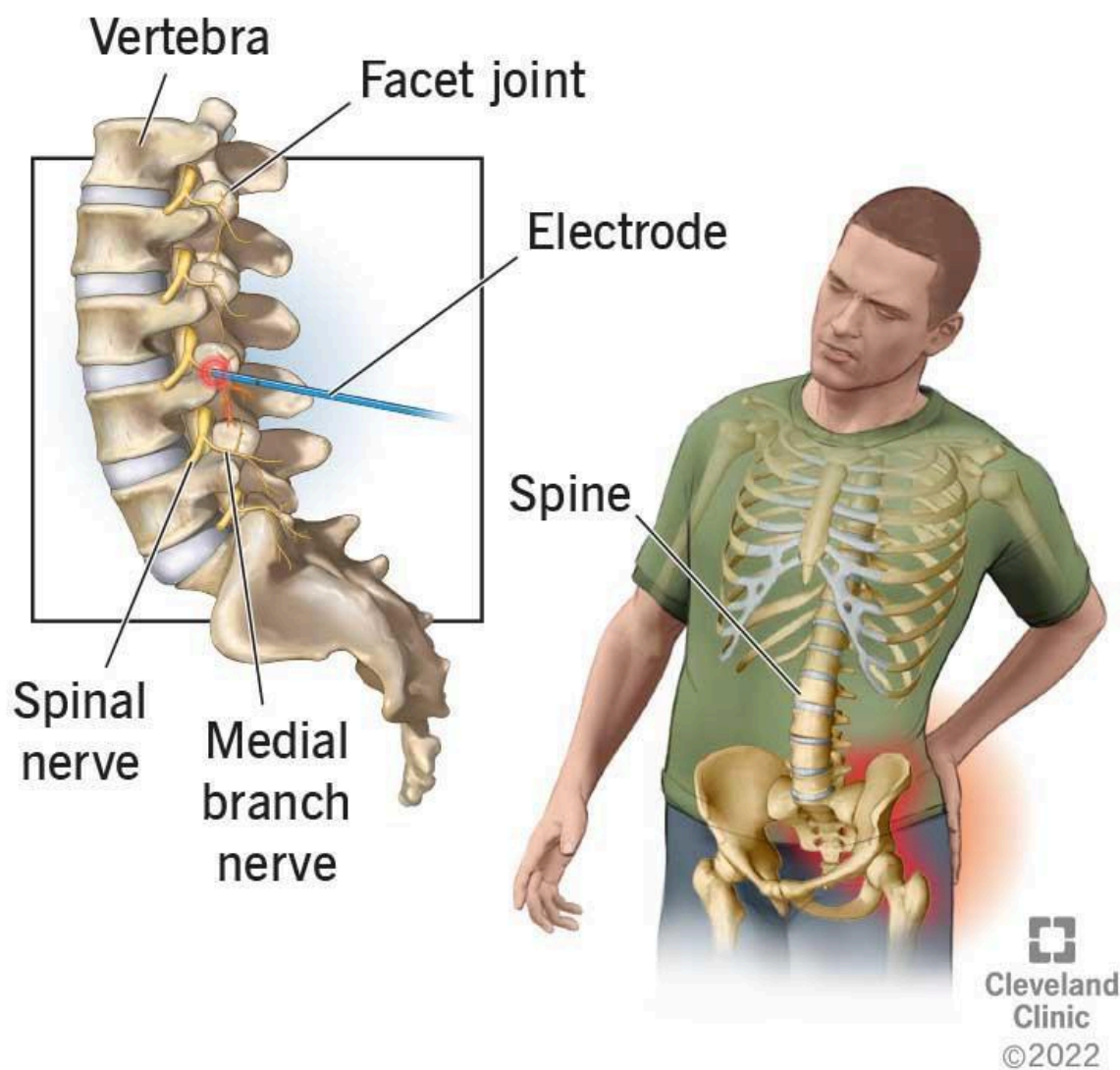
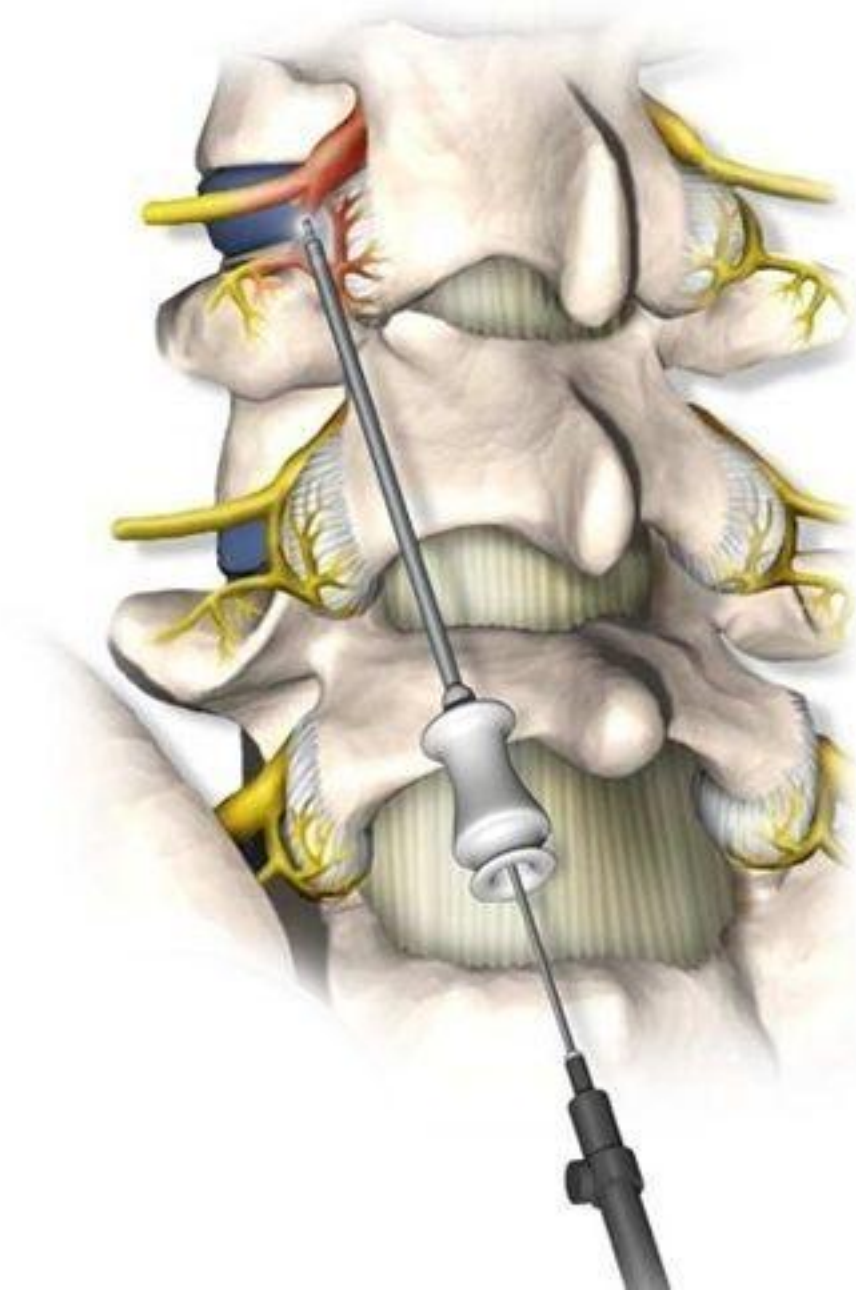
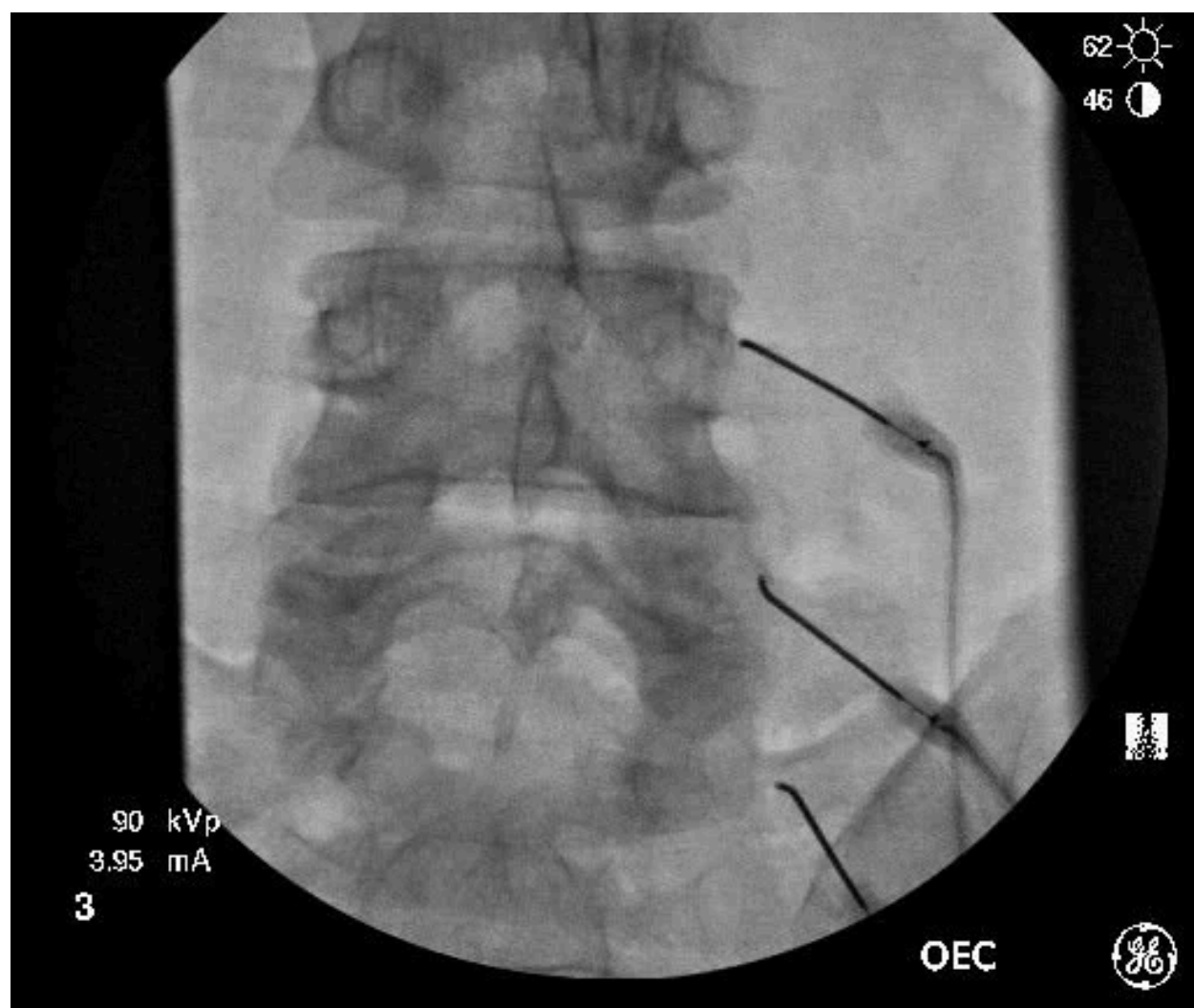
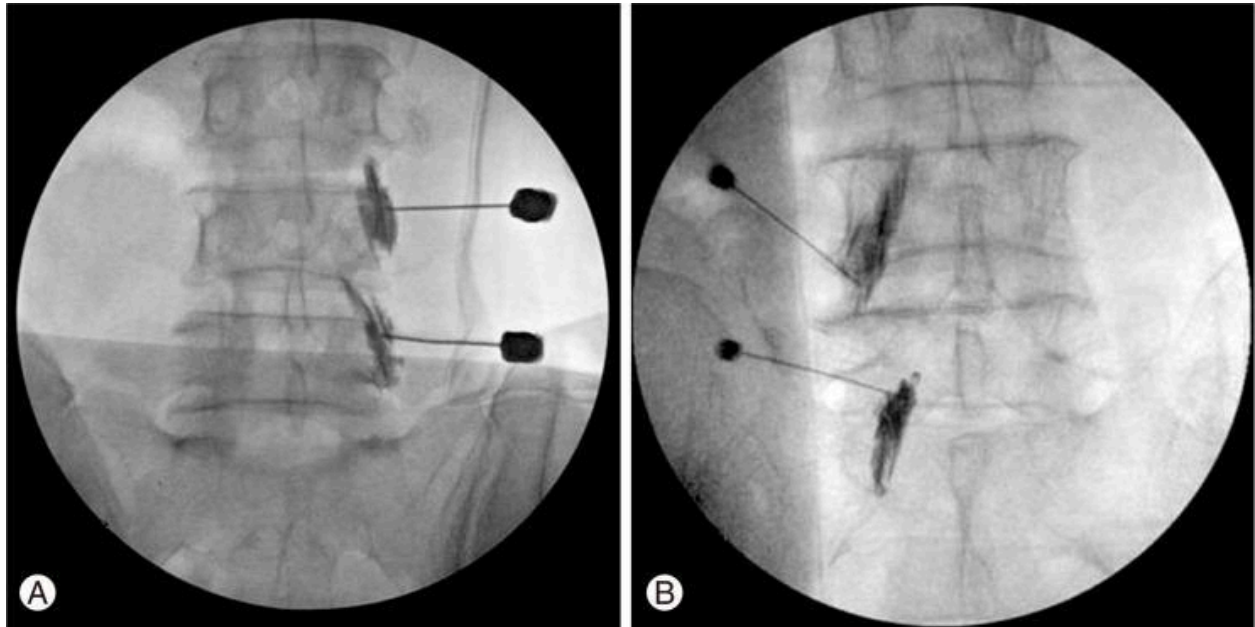


## Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA) *for Pain Management*









## What is Radiofrequency Ablation?

Radiofrequency ablation (RFA) is a medical procedure used to reduce long-lasting back or neck pain. It works by turning off small pain nerves near the spine so they can no longer send pain signals to the brain.

RFA does **not** damage the spine or discs. It only affects the tiny nerves that carry pain signals from the joints in the spine.

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## What Kind of Pain Can RFA Help?

RFA is most often used for pain that comes from the **facet joints** of the spine. These joints help the spine move and can become painful due to arthritis or wear and tear.

RFA may help with:

- Chronic neck pain
- Chronic mid-back pain
- Chronic low back pain
- Pain that gets worse with bending, twisting, or standing

RFA is **not** used for nerve compression pain such as sciatica caused by a slipped disc.

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## How Do We Know RFA Is Right for You?

Before RFA, most patients have **diagnostic nerve blocks**.  
This involves freezing or numbing the pain nerves temporarily.

- If your pain improves after the test injections, it shows those nerves are the pain source
- If the test does **not** help, RFA is unlikely to work

RFA is only offered when these test injections are clearly helpful.

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## How Does the Procedure Work?

- You lie comfortably on a procedure table
- The skin is cleaned and frozen with local anesthetic
- Using X-ray guidance, the doctor places a thin needle near the pain nerve
- Heat from radiofrequency energy is applied for a short time
- This stops the nerve from sending pain signals

The procedure usually takes **20–45 minutes**.

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## Will I Be Awake?

Yes. You are awake but relaxed, using light sedation.

You will be able to go home the same day.

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## Does It Hurt?

Most patients feel:

- Pressure during the procedure
- Mild soreness afterward

Pain is usually mild and improves within a few days.

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## When Will I Feel Better?

- Pain relief does **not** happen immediately
- Improvement usually starts after **1–3 weeks**
- Some patients feel sore before they feel better

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## How Long Does the Relief Last?

Pain relief commonly lasts:

- **6 to 18 months**
- Sometimes longer

The nerves slowly grow back. If pain returns and RFA helped before, the procedure can often be repeated.

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## What Are the Risks?

RFA is considered very safe. Possible side effects include:

- Temporary soreness or swelling
- Bruising at the injection site
- Rarely, numbness or tingling

Serious complications are **very rare**.

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## What Should I Do After the Procedure?

- Take it easy for 24 hours
- Normal activity can usually resume the next day
- Avoid heavy lifting for a few days
- Use ice or simple pain medication if sore

Your doctor may recommend physiotherapy once pain improves.


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## Key Points to Remember

- RFA treats pain nerves, not the spine itself
  - It is used for long-term joint-related spine pain
  - Test injections are required first
  - Pain relief is delayed but often long-lasting
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