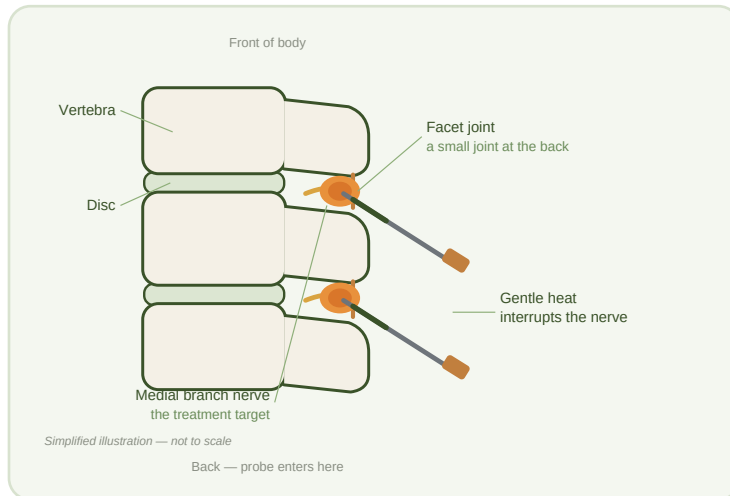


Radiofrequency ablation (RFA)

For facet joint pain confirmed by earlier diagnostic blocks. A probe placed on the medial branch nerve creates gentle heat, interrupting that nerve's ability to carry pain signals from the joint. The joint itself is left alone — only the messenger is treated.



How long it takes

About 20–40 minutes depending on how many levels are treated. Plan on roughly 90 minutes at the clinic.

How it's done

You lie face down. The skin is numbed, and live X-ray guides each probe. Before any heat is applied, we test the position to confirm the probe is on the right nerve and away from others.

Where it happens

[Confirm: office procedure suite or St. Charles Surgical Center]

Going home

Same day, with a driver.

Relief that builds slowly is normal here. Judging it too early is the most common reason patients think it hasn't worked.

Before your visit

- take a blood thinner, including daily aspirin
- have a pacemaker, defibrillator, or spinal cord stimulator — this matters for RFA specifically
- have diabetes, an infection, or a fever
- are or may be pregnant
- Bring your photo ID, insurance card, medication list, and imaging.
- Do not stop any medication unless your care team tells you to.

After your procedure

- **Expect it to take time.** Unlike an injection, relief usually builds over 2–6 weeks rather than appearing immediately.
- Soreness or a temporary flare in the treated area for 1–2 weeks is common and expected.
- An ice pack helps in the first few days; heat is often more comfortable after that.
- Resume walking and normal light activity as comfort allows — this is part of recovery, not a risk.
- Nerves regenerate over time, so relief is not permanent. If it helps, the procedure can usually be repeated.

Call us — (805) 557-7050

a fever; redness, swelling, or drainage at a site; or pain that keeps worsening beyond two weeks.

Call 911 or go to the nearest ER

new weakness in your legs, numbness in the groin or inner thighs, or loss of bladder or bowel control.

This sheet is general information, not medical advice. Your care team will give you instructions specific to your situation — follow those if they differ from this sheet.