



Painful
facet joint



INSERTING THE
CANNULA



TREATING THE
NERVES

Overview

During this minimally-invasive procedure, the physician uses heat from radio waves to treat painful facet joints in your lower back. This procedure is also called radiofrequency rhizotomy. It can treat pain that doesn't respond to medications or to physical therapy.

Preparation

In preparation for the procedure, you lie on your stomach. You are given medicine to make you feel relaxed. The skin and tissue of your back is numbed.

Inserting the Cannula

The physician inserts a tube called a "cannula." A video x-ray device called a "fluoroscope" helps guide the cannula to the medial branch nerves in your spine. These tiny nerves carry pain signals from your facet joints to your brain.

Treating the Nerves

The physician inserts an electrode through the cannula. A weak electric jolt is used to test its position. If the jolt recreates the pain but does not cause any other muscular effects, it is positioned correctly. Then the physician uses the electrode to heat the nerve. This disrupts its ability to transmit pain signals. Several nerves may be treated if necessary.

End of Procedure

When the procedure is complete, the electrode and cannula are removed. A small bandage is placed on your skin. You will be monitored for a brief time before you are allowed to go home. Your injection site may feel sore after the procedure, and you may still have back pain. If the correct nerves were treated, you will gradually experience pain relief as you heal. This may take several weeks. Your relief may last for several months.