

# Lumbar Radiofrequency Neurotomy

## OVERVIEW

Also called radiofrequency (RF) rhizotomy, this procedure reduces or stops pain in the spinal facets. A slight electric current is used to cut the nerves serving the painful facet joints. This quick, minimally-invasive procedure is performed under local anesthetic.

## STEP 1

A needle-like tube called a cannula is inserted and positioned near the targeted medial branch. An x-ray or fluoroscope is used to help position the cannula properly.

## STEP 2

A radiofrequency electrode is inserted through the cannula. To make sure it is in the right location, a small amount of electricity stimulates the area. If the stimulation recreates the pain without any other muscular effects, the electrode is in the right place.

## STEP 3

To cut the nerve, the surgeon sends enough electricity through the electrode to heat the nerve. Once one neurotomy is done, the surgeon may do the same procedure on one or more nerves.

## END OF PROCEDURE

After the procedure, the electrode and cannula are removed. An increase in pain may occur for about a week after the procedure, but full relief from pain is usually felt within a month. Successful RF neurotomies may last longer than steroid block injections.

