

Thyroid Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA)

This *Health Facts for You* will tell you how to prepare for and care for yourself after thyroid radiofrequency ablation (RFA).

Getting Ready for Treatment

Safety Guidelines

Tell your doctor if you:

- Have a pacemaker.
- Have any implants.
- Are pregnant.
- Are on any blood thinning medicine.

Diet

Stop all food 6 hours before. Clear liquids are okay.

Medicines

We will review the list of your medicines. We will tell you if need to make any changes before RFA treatment. Most medicines will not affect your treatment. If you are taking blood thinners, please talk to your doctor to see when you should stop taking them. If you take aspirin, we suggest you stop taking it for 1 week before treatment.

Anti-Anxiety Medicine

We can give you medicine (Valium 5 mg) to help with anxiety during the treatment. This will be given to you in the procedure room 45-60 minute **before** treatment.

Once you take Valium, you **cannot** drive a car. You should plan to have someone drive you to and from your visit.

What to Wear

- Do **not** wear makeup, lipstick, or any metal jewelry.
- Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothes. We can also give you a hospital gown to change into if needed.
- Do **not** wear clothing that covers the neck.

Insurance

RFA is a newer treatment so some insurance plans may not cover this treatment. Patients will need to pay for any costs not covered by insurance. We can help you contact your insurance to learn about coverage.

During Treatment

Treatment Process

During RFA treatment, you will lay on your back on an exam table with your neck slightly extended. We will attach two grounding pads to both thighs to prevent skin burn. We may need to shave the thighs to place the grounding pads.

It is normal to feel pressure, minor pain, and hear a popping noise during the treatment. It should not cause intense pain. Please let your provider know if you feel intense or sharp pain.

The treatment itself takes about 30-60 minutes. This depends on the number and size of the nodule(s). You will spend another 1-2 hours in the hospital for your prep and recovery time.

Care After Treatment

Activity

- **No** soaking in a bathtub for 48 hours
- **No** lifting over 10 lbs or do any strenuous activity for 7 days.

Just relax after treatment. You can return to your normal routine the day after treatment.

In most cases, RFA will not affect your energy or strength. If you feel any sudden change in your energy level, please contact your doctor right away.

If you took anti-anxiety medicine, for the next 24 hours, **do not**:

- Drive
- Operate heavy equipment/machines
- Make **any** important decisions
- Drink alcohol
- Take any sedating drugs such as opioids, benzodiazepines, or sleep aids, unless approved by a doctor

Diet

You may resume your normal diet. Drink plenty of fluids.

Medicine

If you have pain after treatment. You can take pain medicine such as ibuprofen and Tylenol[®]. You can keep taking your other regular medicine.

Wound Care/Dressings

You may remove the Band-Aid or dressing after a few hours and take a shower.

Scars

You will **not** scar. There will be a small mark from the needle for about 1-2 days. Any scarring would be uncommon.

Follow Up

Follow up will include a visit with another ultrasound and thyroid function test at 3 and 12 months after your procedure.

Success of Treatment

Most patients see the nodules start to decrease in size about 2-4 weeks after treatment. The nodule will keep shrinking over the next year. The nodule will not completely disappear, but it should shrink between 60-80%.

One procedure should be enough to reduce the size of a nodule and improve symptoms. Some patients benefit from a second round of treatment. This depends on the size of the nodule and how many you have.

When to Call

Call if you have any questions or concerns. Please seek medical help right away if you have:

- Redness, tenderness, swelling, or drainage from the procedure site.
- Chills or a fever above 101°F.
- Dizziness, nausea, vomiting,
- Trouble swallowing, speaking, or breathing

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 6/2024 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF#8350.