

Cervical Medial Branch Block (MBB) and Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA)

Understanding Your Risks

This document outlines the potential complications associated with **cervical medial branch blocks (MBB)** and **cervical radiofrequency ablation (RFA)**. These are minimally invasive, image-guided procedures performed under fluoroscopic (X-ray) guidance.

A **medial branch block** involves injection of a small amount of local anesthetic, with or without steroid, near the medial branch nerves that supply the cervical facet joints. This procedure is primarily diagnostic and is used to determine whether facet joints are the source of neck pain.

Radiofrequency ablation is a therapeutic procedure performed after successful diagnostic blocks, in which controlled heat generated by radiofrequency energy is applied to the medial branch nerves to interrupt pain signals for a longer period of time.

The usual purpose of these procedures is to **diagnose and/or treat chronic neck pain** believed to originate from the cervical facet joints, particularly in patients with cervical spondylosis, facet arthropathy, or degenerative changes.

Risks:

- **Temporary increase in neck pain or soreness at the injection site**
- **Vasovagal reaction** (lightheadedness, dizziness, fainting)
- **Allergic reaction to medications or contrast dye**
- **Infection** (superficial or deep, including abscess formation)
- **Bleeding or hematoma formation**
- **Nerve irritation or injury**, including increased pain, numbness, tingling, or weakness
- **Temporary numbness or sensory changes**
- **Muscle spasm or stiffness**

- **Local skin burn or irritation** (radiofrequency ablation)
- **Neuropathic pain or neuritis following ablation**
- **Failure to relieve symptoms or recurrence of pain as nerves regenerate**
- **Temporary systemic effects of medications** (facial flushing, insomnia, mood changes, elevated blood sugar if steroids are used)
- **Spinal cord injury, stroke, or death** (extremely rare)

Risk Factors for Increased Complications:

- **Use of blood thinners or bleeding disorders**
- **Diabetes** (increased risk of transient blood sugar elevation)
- **Prior cervical spine surgery, altered anatomy, or deformity**

Patient Acknowledgment:

By signing below, the patient acknowledges understanding of the above risks associated with Cervical Medial Branch Block and Radiofrequency Ablations and all questions have been answered to the patient's satisfaction.

Patient Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Patient Name: _____ **DOB:** _____

