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**THE CENTER FOR PAIN MEDICINE  
MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL**

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**RADIOFREQUENCY TREATMENT**

*Information Sheet for Patients*

*What is a radiofrequency treatment?* Radiofrequency treatment utilizes a specialized generator that produces radiofrequency current. This current passes through a needle and results in precise heating at the tip of the needle. When the needle is placed near the facet joints, this can produce precise heating and destruction of the nerve tissue surrounding the facet joint, thus interrupting pain signals from the facet joints.

*What is the goal of radiofrequency lesioning?* To provide significant, enduring pain relief so that you may be able to resume normal activities and, in some cases, continue a physical therapy program. If successful, the effects of radiofrequency treatment can last from 3 to 18 months. However, the pain relief is not permanent, as the nerves can regenerate.

*What happens before a treatment?* You will be escorted to a procedure room where a nurse will conduct a pre-procedure interview. The pain specialist who will be performing the injection will review your medical history, previous image studies, physical exam and current medications.

*What happens during the procedure?* The patient remains awake during the entire process. Blood pressure, heart rate and breathing are continually monitored. Lying face down on the procedure table the injection site is cleansed with an antiseptic. This procedure involves inserting a needle through the skin, muscle and soft tissues, so there is some slight discomfort involved. An injection of local anesthetic (numbing medication) will be administered in the area where you are experiencing pain. The physician then directs a needle through the skin with the use of x-ray guidance. You will be asked to let the physician know when you feel a buzzing, tingling, or pressure sensation in your back. This electrical stimulation is done before any heating of the area around the nerves takes place. This is a temporary sensation. The tissues surrounding the needle tip are then heated for 60 to 90 seconds at each level. This procedure takes approximately 45 minutes.

