

# Trigeminal Neuralgia Radiofrequency Rhizotomy

TWH

## Why do I need a Radiofrequency Rhizotomy?

Radiofrequency is a treatment option for those people who suffer from Trigeminal Neuralgia (TN) (pain in your face). The Trigeminal nerve is the largest nerve to exit from the brainstem. We each have two trigeminal nerves, one for each side of the face. The trigeminal nerve supplies sensation to the face, jaw, teeth, eyeball, and part of the tongue. The nerve also supplies the muscles that allow us to chew.

## The procedure:

You will be assisted to the operating room, where the doctor (anesthetist) will put you to sleep. Once asleep, the surgeon will insert a needle into the side of the cheek close to the nerve. Once the needle is in place, you will be awakened and the surgeon will touch different parts of the nerve. Once your painful spot is found, the doctor will put you back to sleep and the surgeon will heat the nerve in order to block pain communication from the nerve to the brain. This procedure takes about one hour.

## What will happen after the procedure?

You will be moved to the recovery room, where you will stay until you are ready to go home. One side of your face may be tender to the touch.

## What are the advantages of the procedure?

- Is a low risk treatment
- Pain relief, if effective, occurs within 24 hours

© 2005 University Health Network. All rights reserved.

*This information is to be used for informational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Please consult your health care provider for advice about a specific medical condition. A single copy of these materials may be reprinted for non-commercial personal use only.*

Author: Dawn Tymianski

Created: 04/2005

Form: D-5124

- Success 80%
- Rate of recurrence: 5 years
- You go home the same day

### **What are the disadvantages to the procedure?**

- Side effects: possible face and eye numbness
- Rare < 2%: 'Anaesthesia Dolorosa' or facial pain syndrome

### **What should I know about going home?**

- You do not stay in the hospital over night and will require someone to take you home

### **After the procedure you may experience:**

- tenderness and/or bruising
- numbness
- headache
- fullness or ringing in the ear

These symptoms usually go away in a few days

### **What do I do if the pain returns after I go home?**

- Some patients have a small return of their pain. For most people, the pain will get better after a week or two. If the pain lasts longer than two weeks, call your surgeon or family doctor.

### **After my first follow-up visit, when should I call the surgeon?**

- Call if the pain/numbness or tenderness occurs after your first follow up clinic visit.
- If you develop a red eye

### **When can I stop taking my TN medication?**

Speak to your family doctor or surgeon about your schedule to stop your medication once the pain subsides.

### **When can I return to work and daily activities?**

- Most people only require a day or two off work.
- All daily activities, such as bathing, can start right away

It is important that you ask your nurse or a member of the surgical team your questions before you go home.