

## **Genicular Nerve Blocks/Radiofrequency Ablation**

### **What are Genicular Nerve Blocks and Radiofrequency Ablation?**

- Patients with chronic knee pain that has failed to respond to more conservative treatments or who are not candidates for surgery may benefit from radiofrequency ablation (AKA RFA, radiofrequency neurotomy) of the genicular nerves of the knee.
- The knee joint is innervated by the articular branches of multiple nerves, including the femoral, common peroneal, saphenous, tibial, and obturator nerves, which are collectively known as the genicular nerves.
- Genicular nerve blocks are a procedure where the genicular nerves are temporarily anesthetized with a local anesthetic injected through small needles using x-ray guidance.
- If you get significant relief through the temporary genicular nerve blocks, you may be a candidate for a radiofrequency ablation (AKA RFA, rhizotomy, radiofrequency neurotomy). This procedure involves using a small amount of radiofrequency energy to heat the genicular nerves. This will prevent the nerves from sending pain signals to the spinal cord and brain. Pain relief varies but, on average, patients will receive 6-18 months of relief.
- The injections are performed under real-time x-ray guidance and needle position is confirmed with either contrast dye for the genicular nerve blocks or nerve stimulation prior to performance of the radiofrequency ablation.
- This injection is performed in conjunction with other treatment modalities, such as physical therapy, massage/soft tissue release, chiropractic treatment, acupuncture, and medications to help you attain the most amount of pain relief.

### **Risks of Injection:**

- Genicular nerve blocks and RFA are generally very safe. However, there are potential risks associated with them:
  - Infection
  - Bleeding
  - Nerve injury
  - Elevation of blood sugar or blood pressure due to steroids

### **Prior to the injection:**

- Blood thinners must be held prior to the injection to reduce the risk of bleeding. Please contact your prescribing physician for approval to stop these medications.
- Light sedation is offered for the procedure. You may not eat or drink 8 hours prior to your injection if you are receiving sedation.
- Notify your physician if you have had recent fevers, illnesses, or hospitalizations.



**Injection Day and Afterwards:**

- Please wear comfortable shoes and clothes. You will change into a gown at the center and lie face-down for the procedure.
- The injection takes approximately 15 minutes. Please allow 1-2 hours of time at the facility.
- Arrange for a driver to transfer you home from the facility as you may have had sedation and/or experience temporary numbness or weakness requiring assistance.
- In the 4-6 hours following the genicular nerve blocks, please perform safe activities that normally aggravate your pain to determine if performing the RFA will benefit you. You may rest following the RFA.
- You may resume Physical Therapy 2 days following the injection as tolerated.
- Please arrange for a follow-up visit in the office 1-2 weeks after your injection.