

After percutaneous radiofrequency ablation (RFA) of your thyroid nodule

You have had radiofrequency ablation to a thyroid nodule, where we treat the nodule by inserting a needle under ultrasound guidance and destroy tissue using heat. This leaflet gives you aftercare advice and tells you what to look out for as you recover from your procedure. If you have any other queries please call the Radiology Department on 0118 322 7961.

What can I expect after my RFA?

- Rest, take it easy and avoid strenuous activity for the next 48 hours. You should expect to be off work for the next two or three days, depending on how you feel.
- Eat and drink as you wish.
- You may have pain, bruising and discomfort near/around the treatment site. This should improve over the next 72 hours. Please take painkillers for relief at home, following the dosage instructions on the packet.
- Slight oozing from your wound site is normal. If you see fresh blood or bleeding put pressure on it immediately. Pressure should be firm enough to stop the bleeding but no more to avoid unnecessary pain. If it does not stop after 10 minutes of pressure, then call for help – attend the Emergency Department (A&E) or call 999.

What to look out for

Problem	How to deal with it?
Local swelling at the treatment site	This is very common after the procedure and almost always settles down over a few days. Using an icepack (or frozen bag of peas or similar) may also be helpful. To protect your skin wrap the icepack in a towel and use for no more than 10 minutes every two to three hours. If swelling continues and doesn't improve, seek medical advice by contacting the Radiology Department
Infection	Infection is rare but if you have swelling or pain around the treatment site or if you feel unwell with a temperature, seek medical advice by contacting the Radiology Department
Pain	There will be internal bruising at the treatment site. This is best managed by taking regular painkillers for a few days (see below). Again an icepack (as described above) could be helpful. Rarely, pain can be more severe due to problems like nerve bruising or damage to other structures. If your pain is not gradually settling with painkillers, seek medical advice by contacting Radiology

When to seek medical advice

Please contact us if you have any concerns or questions, but especially if you experience:

- New fresh bleeding. This might be noticed as increasing heavy blood stained dressings, swelling and pain at the treatment site.

- Light headedness, dizziness, nausea, clammy skin or feel generally unwell.
- Pain that is not controlled with painkillers

What painkillers can I take and for how long?

You may have the following painkillers at home, which you can take if it is safe for you to do so:

- Paracetamol – do not take more than 8 tablets in 24 hours.
- Anti-inflammatories – e.g. Ibuprofen. If you are allowed to take these tablets you can do so in addition to paracetamol if you have moderate pain.

As healing occurs, you will feel less pain. Once your pain is controlled and is mild, you should only take paracetamol. If your pain is more severe for more than three days or is not relieved by your painkillers, contact the Radiology Department.

How long should I keep my wound dressing on for?

Try to keep your wound dry for the next 24 hours, after which you can remove the dressing and clean it normally. If you find your wound is still open, redress it with a plaster until it heals.

When can I resume my normal lifestyle?

This will depend on how soon you recover. You should be able to resume most normal activities of daily living within 24-48 hours. You may feel tired over the next week and a full recovery can take a couple of weeks.

When can I drive?

You should consider whether you are well enough to drive. Your wound or pain may prevent you from driving, i.e. being able to perform an emergency stop comfortably. This might take a couple of days but potentially longer.

When will I get my results? What happens next?

The doctor looking after you will arrange for a follow up consultation and ultrasound, normally 3 months after the procedure. Further scans will then be arranged as advised by the doctor looking after you, but normally up to 5 years after your procedure.

How to contact us?

Radiology Day Case Unit on 0118 322 8368 (Monday-Friday 8.30am-5pm) or email rbft.radiologyadmin@nhs.net.

Out of hours please attend your nearest Emergency Department (A&E).

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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Next review due: July 2025

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