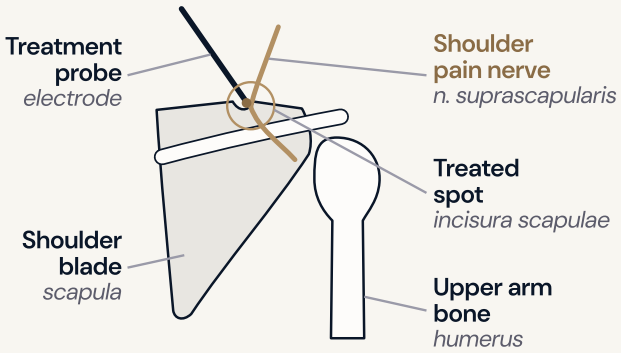
Dr Joe Coory SHOULDER & UPPER LIMB SURGEON

RADIOFREQUENCY ABLATION

Shoulder RFA

A day procedure that treats ongoing shoulder pain by switching off the pain signals from the main nerve of the shoulder. It does not involve any incisions, and most people are back to their usual routine the next day.



WHAT IT IS

Radiofrequency ablation, often called **RFA**, is a treatment for long-term shoulder pain. It works on the nerve that carries pain signals from the shoulder, rather than on the joint itself.

A fine probe is guided to the **suprascapular nerve** (the main pain nerve of the shoulder) where it passes over the top of the shoulder blade. The tip is gently heated, which switches off the nerve's pain signals. Your shoulder muscles keep working as normal.

THE FIRST FEW DAYS

- Expect some discomfort for the first 2 to 3 days. It may come on later, once the numbing medicine wears off. Simple paracetamol is usually enough
- There are no strict limits on what you can do, but take it easy for the first few weeks, as the shoulder can still become inflamed

GETTING BACK TO NORMAL

- You can drive after 24 hours if you feel safe to do so. Most people return to normal duties at work within 24 hours, depending on their job
- A course of physiotherapy afterwards helps you get the most out of your shoulder

HOW LONG IT LASTS

Relief can last up to about 12 months, and for some people less. This is because the body slowly heals the nerve over time. If the pain returns, RFA can be done again.

FOLLOW-UP CARE

- You will go home with a small plaster dressing over the site to protect it. It will start to come away on its own after a couple of days
- Around 2 weeks after your procedure, a Nurse Practitioner will call you by telehealth to check in and see how you are going