

# Thyroid Radiofrequency Ablation

## at Sarasota Memorial's Thyroid and Parathyroid Center

Radiofrequency ablation is a non-surgical alternative that can be used to shrink thyroid nodules, often without compromising thyroid function.

### What is Radiofrequency Ablation?

Radiofrequency ablation (RFA) utilizes heat from radiofrequency waves. Using ultrasound for guidance, the physician places the tip of a needle probe into the thyroid nodule to cauterize the target nodule, which is then broken down by the body's immune system over several months. This results in shrinkage of the nodule leading to improved symptoms and cosmetic appearance. RFA is performed in the medical office or other outpatient setting under local anesthesia and is relatively painless. The procedure takes less than an hour to complete.

### Thyroid conditions generally considered treatable with RFA:

- ▶ Benign thyroid nodules causing a feeling of fullness in the throat
- ▶ Thyroid nodules that produce excess thyroid hormone – often called autonomously functioning, or “hot”, thyroid nodules (AFTN)
- ▶ Thyroid cysts
- ▶ Visually disturbing nodules or cysts that are cosmetically disturbing
- ▶ Small recurrent thyroid cancer lymph nodes after previous surgery

While RFA is typically only appropriate for treatment of benign nodules, some individuals with small cancerous nodules, who are not good candidates for thyroid surgery or don't want thyroid surgery, may also be considered. Specific testing will be performed to determine eligibility. This procedure may not remove the nodule completely, so the thyroid will need to continue to be closely monitored with ultrasound for changes.

### Benefits of RFA:

- ▶ Minimally invasive, outpatient procedure
- ▶ Avoids any scarring
- ▶ Only need local anesthesia
- ▶ Shorter recovery time and less complication risk than surgery
- ▶ No change in thyroid function or reduced function of a hyper-functioning nodule only

### Risks and Complications

In general, RFA may have lower risks than surgery. While uncommon, complications can include:

- ▶ Voice changes, such as hoarseness
- ▶ Slight bleeding
- ▶ Wound infections
- ▶ Seared skin at the treatment site
- ▶ AFTN patients with “hot” thyroid nodules may have the possibility of hypothyroidism after the procedure.

*Insurance reimbursement is not currently available for this procedure.*

*Out of pocket costs should be discussed with your provider.*

**Contact the Thyroid and Parathyroid Center for more information  
at (941) 262-0500 or [www.smhthyroidandparathyroid.com](http://www.smhthyroidandparathyroid.com).**