

Information for Patients

A recent review of which treatments work for back pain has shown that injections are not very effective. One example is the injection of pain-killer into the facet joints. Although many of these have been used in the past, and sometimes with good, short-term relief, they do not work often enough or long enough to make them a good treatment. The risks of the procedure, such as infection, although rare, make them a poor choice.

The NHS finds that the evidence points to other treatment methods as a better option for many people.

What can you do about the condition?

Episodes of back pain are very common and normally improve within a few weeks or months. Although the pain can be very limiting and distressing, in most cases the pain isn't caused by anything serious and will usually get better over time. If the problem persists, your GP may refer you to a specific care pathway which will include physiotherapy, group exercise classes and manual therapy along with self-management strategies.

It's important you and your doctor make a shared decision about what's best for you if the pain is becoming a problem. When deciding what's best you should both consider the benefits, risks, alternatives and what will happen if you do nothing.

What are the **BENEFITS** of the intervention?

The routine use of spinal injections for low back pain is not recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) which assesses the effectiveness of all tests, treatment and procedures.

What are the **RISKS** of the intervention?

The procedure itself can cause discomfort. Complications include bruising, infection of the spine and nerve damage.

What are the **ALTERNATIVES**?

There are many alternatives and you should discuss what might be best for you with your doctor.

Options can include exercise and weight loss, physiotherapy, pain-relief medication, and psychological support such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) which can help you live a better life with the pain. If the clinician treating you feels you need further assessment they should refer you to a specialist who will consider other treatments. This includes other forms of injections which can help some people.

What if you do **NOTHING**?

Doing nothing is not likely to be harmful and back pain usually improves after a few weeks. If the problem persists and is difficult to cope with, you should talk to your doctor about which treatment is best for you.

You can find out more about the [NHS Evidence Based Interventions](#) programme online.