



**Back pain is a very common condition. It is often associated with pain in the legs (sciatica).**

**The pain may originate from any of the structures in the spine e.g. bones, ligaments, joints, or discs. In many cases, there is no obvious cause. Most attacks of back pain resolve after a few days or weeks. Modern medical advice is to keep moving and take simple painkillers. However, if the pain is persistent an injection treatment may give some relief.**

### **What injection treatments are available ?**

The injections described here are all carried out in the operating theatre under X-ray guidance and with local anaesthesia.

**Epidural injection** – An epidural is an injection into an area of your back that surrounds the spinal cord. The procedure is usually performed to help reduce pain that is thought to arise from irritation of nerves in the spine, e.g. sciatica. A local anaesthetic and slow release steroid drug is injected. This will bathe the nerve roots and minimise inflammation which may have an effect on your pain.

There is a small risk (approx. 1 in 100 patients) that the procedure will result in a severe headache, known as a ‘dural tap’. This may first be experienced several hours to days after the procedure. The headache is temporary and is relieved by lying down. It is important that you contact the pain team should this occur.

**Facet joint injection** – please see separate patient information leaflet for further details.

**Sacro-iliac Joint Injection** – please see separate patient information leaflet for further details.

**Facet Joint Radiofrequency Denervation** – This procedure aims to modify the way pain is transmitted from the facet joints to the brain. The nerve is interrupted by heating it with an electrical current from a special device, called a radiofrequency machine. This is usually done following facet joint injections, if only temporary relief was achieved. Facet Joint Denervation may provide you with longer lasting pain relief.

**Trigger Point Injection** – A trigger point can be described as a painful or tight muscle. It can usually be easily felt under the skin and may twitch when touched. It may irritate the surrounding nerves and cause pain in that area of the body. A trigger point injection is an injection of local anaesthetic and slow release steroid directly into the painful or tight muscle. This injection is carried out without the use of X-ray.

### **What are the alternatives to back pain injections ?**

Alternatives will have been discussed with you at your consultation. These can include measures such as physiotherapy, medication and acupuncture.

### **Does the injection have any risks or side effects ?**

Injections are safe and unlikely to result in a complication, but no injection is 100% foolproof. Precautions are always taken to minimize the risk as far as possible.

An increase in discomfort for the first few days after your injection should be expected.

The steroids should have very little effect on the body. However:

- People who have diabetes may find that their blood sugars become worse for a few days.
- Some women experience facial flushing lasting a few days, and menstruation (periods) can become irregular for a month or two.

The incidence of the above is very low and serious problems are extremely rare. If you are at all concerned and would like further advice, please contact the Pain Clinic.