

OUTCOMES AND RISKS

All procedures carry a degree of risk and there is no guarantee that pain procedures will improve pain in all patients.

- Epidurals, nerve root sleeve injections and neurotomies are the **higher-risk procedures**.
- Discomfort during and after the procedure is usually mild.
- In some cases a small amount of anti-anxiety or pain medication will be administered via a drip by an anaesthetist. There is a very small risk associated with the sedation (your anaesthetist may discuss this with you).
- After spinal procedures, you may experience temporary numbness, increase in pain, especially after neurotomies, for up to 2 weeks.
- After an epidural or nerve root sleeve injection a few patients (less than 1%) develop a headache due to a temporary leakage of spinal fluid. This normally settles with rest and pain relief but in some cases may require a second epidural to treat the headache.
- Patients may experience **adverse reactions or allergies** to medications (local anaesthetics steroids, phenol), x-ray dye or antiseptics used during the procedure.
- Other problems may include skin or muscle bruising, blood clots, infection, or in very rare cases, a collapsed lung (with blocks around the chest wall), or a hole in the bladder or bowel (abdominal wall injections).



- **In very rare cases** nerve or spinal cord damage may develop after a procedure, leading to temporary or permanent pain, numbness or weakness in arms or legs, or bladder and bowel control problems.
- Complications may be life-threatening in extremely rare cases.
- The risk of nerve damage is estimated at 1 in 2000.
- The risk of paralysis or a life threatening side effect is estimated at 1 in 20 000.
- To put the risks into context, the chance of a serious complication is **very rare**, much less than the risk of having a car accident whilst driving on any given day.