



Basivertebral Nerve Ablation for Vertebrogenic Back Pain

One-page summary of the full Spinemathema guide. Scan the QR code for the full guide, with references and audio.

Key points

- Basivertebral nerve ablation (BVNA) uses heat to switch off a small nerve inside the bones of the lower spine. It is aimed at one type of long-term back pain, called vertebrogenic pain, thought to come from damaged endplates: the top and bottom surfaces of the spinal bones next to the discs.
- It is only considered for people whose back pain has lasted at least 6 months despite non-surgical treatment, and whose MRI shows particular endplate changes called Modic type 1 or type 2 changes at the matching levels.
- NICE has not yet issued guidance on BVNA. It is assessing the procedure now, with no publication date set. NICE's existing advice on radiofrequency denervation covers a different nerve, the medial branch nerves to the facet joints.
- In trials, about 5 or 6 in 10 people treated reported their back pain at least halved after a year, and many still had benefit at 5 years. Only one trial compared it with a dummy (sham) procedure, and the dummy group also improved a lot.
- Serious complications are uncommon. The main risks are a spell of leg pain, and, mainly in people with thin bones, a small chance of a fracture of the treated bone.

Go to A&E or call 999 straight away if you have back pain together with:

- Pain, tingling, weakness or numbness in both legs.
- Loss of feeling around your genitals or your bottom (anus).
- Changes in your bladder or bowels, such as difficulty peeing, or peeing or pooing yourself.
- Changes in how your genitals feel during sex, or new problems getting or keeping an erection or reaching orgasm.
- Chest pain, or back pain that started after a serious accident.

These apply before and after any procedure. Do not drive yourself to A&E: ask someone to take you, or call 999 for an ambulance. See also our warning signs page.

Not sure how urgent it is? Call NHS 111. More warning signs: spinemathema.com/warning-signs

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General information only, not personal medical advice.

If you are worried about your symptoms, contact your GP,

NHS 111, or in an emergency call 999.

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