

# Radiofrequency ablation for palliation of painful spinal metastases

Information for the public

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There is not enough evidence about how well this procedure works or how safe it is. So it can only be done with special arrangements. This means you will have regular appointments afterwards to check how well it is working or if it has caused problems.

Cancer from other parts of the body can spread to the spine (spinal metastases), causing severe pain and weakness in the vertebrae (bones of the spine). This may lead to instability or fractures and spinal cord compression. In this procedure, a needle-like probe containing an electrode is inserted into the spinal metastases. It produces an electrical current that heats the cancer cells and destroys them (radiofrequency ablation). The aim is to shrink the spinal metastases to relieve pain and other symptoms (palliation).

## Is this procedure right for me?

You should be included in [making decisions about your care](#).

Your healthcare professionals should explain the risks and benefits of this procedure and how it is done. They should discuss your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns. They should offer you more information about the procedure. Your family or carers can be involved if you want or need them to be.

You will be asked to decide whether you agree (consent) to have the procedure. Find out more about [giving consent to treatment on the NHS website](#).

## Some questions to think about

- How many appointments will I need?
- What are the possible benefits? How likely am I to get them?
- What are the risks or side effects? How likely are they?
- Will I have to stay in hospital?
- What happens if it does not work or something goes wrong?
- What happens if I do not want the procedure?
- Are other treatments available?

## Information and support

- [NICE's information on HealthTech guidance](#) explains what HealthTech is and how we assess it.
- [NICE's information on HealthTech recommendations](#) explains what special arrangements are.

[Brain and Spine Foundation](#) (0808 808 1000) can give you advice and support.

You can also get support from your local [Healthwatch](#).

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