

DISCOGRAPHY



What is Discography?

Discography confirms or denies the disc(s) as a source of your pain. It is a relatively simple procedure that uses a small needle to inject contrast dye into your disc. MRI and CT scans only demonstrate anatomy and cannot absolutely prove your pain source. In many instances, discs are abnormal on MRI or CT scans but are not a source of pain.

Only discography, which is a functional test, can tell if the disc itself is a source of your pain. Discography is usually done only if you think your pain is significant enough for you to consider more advanced treatment options, directed at the disc itself, such as surgery.

Why is Discography Used?

Although magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) is a very good tool for showing disc abnormalities, it does not allow your health care provider to directly determine if the abnormalities are causing your pain.

Discography is a very specific tool that may help your health care provider determine if the abnormal disc is causing your pain. Generally, patients who undergo discography have not gotten satisfactory pain relief from nonoperative measures such as medication, physical therapy and modified activities. They usually have had back pain for at least 4 to 6 months.

Discography is usually used in patients who are being evaluated to determine a specific cause of pain so a new treatment plan (possibly including surgery) can be developed.

How is Discography Performed?

The procedure is done with you lying on your stomach. Your vital signs will be monitored with an EKG, blood pressure cuff, and oxygen monitor. The skin over the injection site(s) is cleaned with an

antiseptic solution and then the injections are performed. An x-ray machine is used to identify the specific levels. After the procedure, you will be placed on your back in the recovery room.

The injection consists of x-ray dye. It is usually mixed with some antibiotics to prevent infection.

Discography takes about 30 to 45 minutes, depending on how many levels are injected.

In Pain? We Can Help.

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