

Discography

What are the discs?

The discs are soft, cushion-like pads that separate the hard vertebral bones of your spine. A disc may be painful when it bulges, herniates, tears or degenerates and may cause pain in your neck, mid-back, low back and/or arms, and legs. Other structures in your spine may also cause similar pain such as the muscles, joints and nerves.

Why is a discography helpful?

A discography confirms or denies the disc(s) as a source of your pain. It is a relatively simple procedure that uses a 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, the discs may be abnormal on MRI or CT scans but not be a source of pain. Only a discography, which is a functional test, can tell if the disc itself is a source of your pain. Therefore, discography is done to identify painful disc(s) and help the surgeon plan the correct surgery or avoid surgery that may not be beneficial. Discography is usually done only if you think your pain is significant enough for you to consider surgery or more advanced treatment options.

What will happen to me during the procedure?

The physician may decide to place an IV for relaxation medication to be administered. You will lie on your back for cervical discography, on your stomach for thoracic and lumbar discography. Your skin will be well cleaned. Next the physician will numb a small area of skin which may sting for a few seconds. The physician will use x-ray guidance to direct a small needle into your disc. You may feel temporary discomfort as the needle passes through the muscle or near a nerve root. The physician may repeat this at several adjoining disc levels. After the needles are in their proper locations, a small amount of contrast dye is injected into each disc. If a disc is the source of your usual pain, the injection will temporarily reproduce your symptoms, if a disc is not the source of your pain, the injection will not reproduce your symptoms or cause any discomfort.

What should I do after the procedure?

You may not drive for 8 hours after the procedure. you may be given a prescription for pain medication for post-procedure discomfort. Do not apply heat to your back for the first 24 hours after the procedure.

Pre & Post Procedure instructions can be found under the General Information tab, then select Procedures

Reminder: You must have a driver with you for your procedure

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