

DISCOGRAM

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a discogram? A discogram is a purely diagnostic procedure in which x-ray dye is injected into the discs of the spine. After the x-ray dye is injected, a CT Scan is taken of the discs. The results of the discogram are used to plan your treatment.

What is the purpose of a Discogram? It is done to answer the questions “Is my back pain or neck pain from a degenerated disc? and “Which discs-if any- are causing my pain?”

How do I know if my pain is from a damaged disc? With age or from an injury, the wall of the spinal discs can get cracks or tears. This condition is called degenerative disc disease. Also the wall of the disc can weaken and bulge out (a herniated disc). When the disc causes pain, the pain is usually felt as a deep, aching pain in the back and sometimes in the buttocks and into the thigh. However, similar pain can be caused by other conditions; therefore, a discogram can help in distinguishing the cause.

How is the procedure performed? The procedure is done in an operating room with x-ray guidance. Your doctor and his staff will be there to monitor you and administer medication to help you feel comfortable and relaxed. The skin over the injection site is cleaned with an antiseptic solution and then the injections are carried out. After the injection, you are placed on your back or on your side to relax.

What will I feel during the injection? When a normal disc is injected, you feel a sense of pressure, but no pain. When an abnormal disc is injected, you will feel some discomfort or pain. It is important to try to tell if the pain you are feeling is your usual pain or a different type of pain. With each disc injected, you will be asked if it is painful, where you feel the pain, and whether it is in the same area as your usual pain.

How many discs will be injected? Based on your symptoms and MRI, we will identify which discs we suspect are causing your pain. These discs will be injected. In addition, we inject a normal disc to serve as a reference point.

Will my pain be better after the injection? NO. A discogram does not treat your condition. It is a diagnostic procedure that allows the doctor to plan how to treat your pain more specifically.

What should I do after the procedure? You will need a ride home. We advise the patient to take it easy for a day or so after the procedure. You may need to apply ice to the affected area for 20-30 minutes at a time for a day or two.

Can I go to work the next day? We recommend taking at least one week off after the procedure.

Will I have restrictions after the procedure? You may not drive for the remainder of the day after your procedure. Perform activities as tolerated. Do not apply any heat in the injected area for 24 hours. No tub or soaking in water for the remainder of the day.

When will I return for a follow-up visit? You will be schedule for a follow-up 2-4 weeks following the procedure. If you are informed of the results on the day of your procedure call to cancel your follow-up and schedule the next procedure per your physicians instructions. If you have questions on the next procedure please keep your follow-up and come in to speak with the doctor.

Note: This procedure cannot be performed if you have an active infection, flu, cold, fever, or very high blood pressure. Please make us aware of these conditions.