

Disco

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Discography is used to determine if back pain is caused by one or more discs.



1 A local anesthetic numbs the skin and all the tissue down to the disc area.



3 Discs are pressurized one at a time with injections of contrast dye.



2 Through a guide needle, a smaller needle is inserted into the center of the disc.

Healthy discs may feel pressure

Damaged discs feel pain

4 Each disc is tested and pictures are taken with the x-ray unit.

Guide needle

Needle

Discography

Discography, or discogram, is a diagnostic procedure used to determine if back pain is caused by one or more discs and to help the surgeon plan the correct back surgery. The procedure involves pressurizing discs with an injection of sterile liquid to induce pain in the affected discs.

STEP 1

Patients lie either on their side or stomach on a table equipped with a fluoroscopic x-ray unit. An intravenous (IV) line administers medication to relax the patient. It is important for patients to be awake enough to tell the doctor what they are feeling. A local anesthetic numbs the skin and all the tissue down to the disc area.

STEP 2

Using x-ray fluoroscopy to find the right spot, the doctor inserts a guide needle through the anesthetized track to the outer edge of the disc. Through the guide needle, a smaller needle is inserted into the center of the disc. This may be repeated for more than one disc.

STEP 3

Once all the needles are placed, the discs are pressurized one at a time with injections of contrast dye. With each injection, patients feel either pressure or pain. If pain is felt, it is important for patients to compare it to the pain they had been experiencing. If it is the same, this may indicate this is a diseased disc.

STEP 4

After each disc is tested, pictures are taken with the x-ray unit and the needles are removed. Patients may be taken for a CT scan to obtain additional pictures of the inside of the discs.

END OF PROCEDURE

Discography usually takes less than an hour to perform. The procedure may cause soreness for a few days. Patients are usually advised to take acetaminophen or ibuprofen and to ice the affected area for several minutes each day until the soreness subsides.

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