



# Discogram

A discogram is an x-ray procedure that deliberately provokes the patient's pain symptoms in order to pinpoint its source in the intervertebral discs. The procedure is designed to create a pain "**Road-Map**" making the discogram an excellent fusion surgery planning tool, or allowing your physician to customize other treatment options.

Discography is reserved for patients who have not responded to medications and conservative treatments, such as bed rest, traction, or physical therapy, and for whom the possibility of lumbar (lower back) surgery is being considered. Besides studying abnormal discs, discograms can detect problems within intervertebral discs that appeared normal on the **CAT SCAN OR MRI SCAN**.

## **During the procedure - what to expect:**

You will lie on your stomach for lumbar and thoracic procedures and on your back for cervical procedures. Using x-ray guided technology (fluoroscopy), your physician will place a thin needle into the center of your disc(s) thought to be causing your pain. Contrast is then injected and x-rays are taken.

During and immediately following the procedure, you will be asked to describe what you are feeling (does it reduce your symptoms). A discogram reveals the exact source of your disc pain by awakening the pain symptom in that disc. When a healthy disc is injected, you will feel little or no pain. If the disc is not healthy, your pain may intensify. As soon as that symptom has been recorded, the doctor will put the disc to sleep with local anesthetic (numbing medication). You will remain awake during the procedure, which takes approximately 15-45 minutes. If necessary, additional pain medication will be given at the conclusion of the procedure.

In selected cases, a CT exam will follow, depending on the findings of your study and any prior imaging you may have had.

**After the procedure - what to expect:**

Some degree of discomfort during and after this procedure is expected. Limit your "stress-bearing" or "strenuous" activities for 24 hours due to expected post-procedure discomfort. We recommend taking the following day off of work, but the decision to return to work is at your discretion. A prescription for post-procedural pain medication may be available for patients who require it.

**Possible side effects:**

You may experience post-procedural discomfort for a few days, muscle spasms, and rarely a disc infection. Cervical discograms may experience swelling or difficulty swallowing.