

# Discography

## Appointment Information

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

## About

Discograms, or discography scans, are used to help determine whether a specific intervertebral disc may be the source of back pain in patients. This outpatient procedure may be performed prior to surgery to help identify discs that need to be treated or removed.

Intervertebral discs are sponge-like cushions between the vertebrae, or bones, of the spine. Each disc has a strong outer layer called an annulus and a center part, called a nucleus, made of a soft, rubber-like material. When discs bulge or rupture, they may press on the nerves of the spinal column and cause back pain or weakness.

In a discogram scan, a contrast material is injected into the center of one or more spinal discs using x-ray guidance while you lay on the examination table on your side. This injection may temporarily reproduce the patient's back pain symptoms. During the exam, you must be awake in order to communicate any of the symptoms you might experience during the test.

After the discography is complete a CT scan may be performed to further analyze the injected disc(s). When contrast material spreads outside a disc, it may indicate that there are fissures in the outer ring of the disc.

A discography scan is usually completed within 30 minutes to an hour, depending on how many disc levels your radiologist wants to evaluate. Following the exam, you will be taken to an observation area for 30 to 60 minutes.

## Preparations

Prior to your discography procedure, your blood may be tested to determine how well your kidneys are functioning and whether your blood clots normally.

You should report to your radiologist all medications that you are taking, including herbal supplements, and if you have any allergies, especially to local anesthetic medications, general anesthesia or to contrast materials containing iodine (sometimes referred to as "dye" or "x-ray dye"). In addition, if you are pregnant, or could possibly be pregnant please inform your radiologist.

You may also be advised you to stop taking aspirin, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) or blood thinners for a specified period of time before your discogram procedure. Also inform your radiologist about recent illnesses or other medical conditions.

You will likely be instructed not to eat or drink anything after midnight before your discography procedure. Plan to have a relative or friend drive you home after your discogram procedure.