

LUMBAR DISCOGRAM

For Diagnosing Disc Pain

A lumbar discogram is an outpatient procedure for diagnosing painful tears in the intervertebral disc in your lower back. This information sheet will explain what it is. Your doctor can explain if it is for you.

What are intervertebral discs?

Intervertebral discs are found between the vertebrae (bones) of the spine. These soft discs cushion the vertebrae, hold them together and control motion. They are located in the neck, upper and lower back. Each disc has two parts, the inner part is called the nucleus and the outer part is called the annulus. The annulus has nerve endings that are sensitive to pain.

What causes pain in a disc?

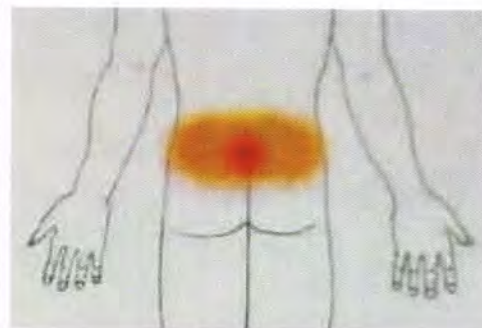
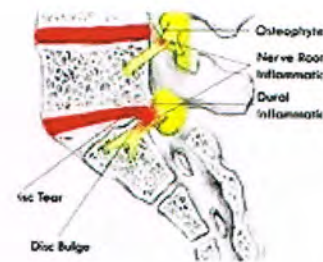
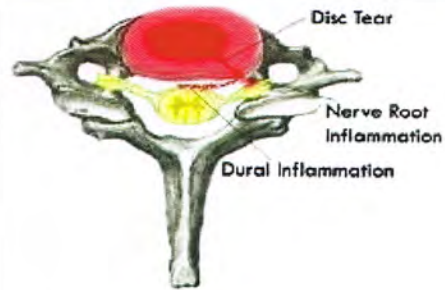
If a disc tears, it can inflame the nerves in the outer part of the disc and cause pain, it may cause low back and/or leg pain. An untreated disc tear may cause a disc to bulge or herniate. This can further inflame or compress the nerve roots and cause even more pain. This means early diagnosis of disc tears is important.

How do I know if I have disc pain?

If you have pain in your low back or legs and it has not improved with treatment, you may have disc pain. Common tests such as MRIs can show disc bulges and nerve root compression, but may not always show tears or leaks in discs. Discograms are the best way to diagnose torn discs. They can also provide important information to determine if you would benefit from spine surgery.

What is a discogram?

Discograms is a procedure that helps your doctor find disc tears that may be causing your pain. During a discogram a thin needle is inserted into the center of a disc. X-ray dye will be injected into the disc to identify whether or not the disc is painful. The dye will outline the tears in the disc. This is often done to several discs to find the specific one that is causing your pain.



LUMBAR DISCOGRAM

For Diagnosing Disc Pain

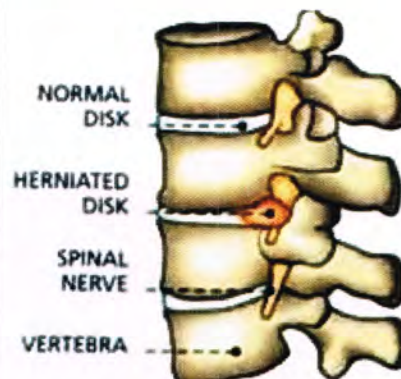
What happens during a discogram?

A local anesthetic will be used to numb your skin. The doctor will then insert a thin needle directly into the disc. X-ray will be used to ensure the safe and proper position of the needle. X-ray dye will be injected to outline the disc and/or tear. It is important to describe any pain you feel during the discogram. A healthy disc will not cause your normal pain, but a torn disc may. If you feel a different pain be sure to explain that it hurts but it's not your usual pain. This will help the doctor determine which disc may be responsible for your pain.



What happens after a discogram?

You will be monitored for up to 60 minutes after the injection. When you are ready to leave, the staff will give you discharge instructions. You may be sent for a CT scan to get an image of your discs. You may feel increased pain in your back after a discogram. This indicates your doctor may have found the source of your pain. You can usually return to work a day or two after a discogram, but always check with your doctor.



What happens next?

You will have a follow up appointment with our doctor to discuss the results of the discogram. Your doctor will then recommend the best treatment for you based on the results.



Consultants in Pain Management

2000 Stein Drive
Chattanooga, TN 37421
(423)648-8480 Fax (423)648-8481

Dr. Gregory Ball
Dr. Sandra Kaplan