



Discography: A Critical Tool for Diagnosing Disc-Related Pain

What is Discography?

Spinal discs are crucial components of your back's structure, acting as shock absorbers between the vertebrae and allowing for flexibility in the spine. However, when these discs degenerate, tear, or herniate, they can cause significant pain and discomfort.

Discography is a specialized diagnostic procedure used to identify which specific disc(s) in your spine may be the source of your pain. This procedure involves injecting a contrast dye into the disc and observing your pain response, providing valuable information about the disc's potential role in your symptoms.

Considered the gold standard for [diagnosing spinal disc-related pain](#), discography offers distinct advantages over other imaging techniques like MRI or CT scans. While these scans can show structural abnormalities, they don't always correlate with pain. Discography, on the other hand, directly assesses pain provocation, offering a more precise diagnosis of symptomatic disc pathology.

How is Discography Helpful?

Discography is an invaluable tool in spine care for several reasons:

- **Precise Pain Source Identification:** By injecting each disc individually, discography can pinpoint exactly which disc(s) are causing your pain.
- **Treatment Planning:** The results of a discography can guide your physician in developing the most appropriate treatment plan, whether it's conservative management, targeted injections, or more advanced intervention.
- **Differentiation of Pain Sources:** When multiple disc abnormalities are present, discography can help determine which are symptomatic and which are incidental findings.

The accurate diagnosis provided by discography can lead to more [effective non-surgical treatments](#), potentially faster recovery, and improved outcomes for patients suffering from chronic back pain.

The Discography Procedure Explained

Before the Procedure

- You'll be asked to fast for several hours before the procedure.
- Arrive at the facility wearing comfortable, loose-fitting clothing.
- Bring a list of your current medications and any relevant imaging studies.
- Inform your doctor of any allergies, especially to contrast dyes.

During the Procedure

- An IV will be placed to administer antibiotics to prevent infection.
- You'll lie on your stomach on the procedure table.
- The area of your back to be injected will be cleaned and numbed with local anesthetic.
- Using fluoroscopic (X-ray) guidance, a thin needle will be inserted into the center of the targeted disc(s).
- A small amount of contrast dye will be injected into each disc.
- You'll be asked to rate your pain level and describe any sensations you experience during each injection.
- The procedure typically takes about 30-60 minutes, depending on how many discs are being examined.

After the Procedure

- You'll be monitored for a short period in a recovery area.
- You may experience some soreness at the injection sites.
- Follow-up imaging (CT scan) will then be performed to visualize the dye distribution within the discs.
- Your doctor will discuss the results with you at a separate appointment.

General Pre-Op and Post-Op Instructions

Pre-operative Instructions

- Do not eat or drink anything for 6 hours before the procedure.
- Continue taking your regular medications unless instructed otherwise.
- If you're on blood thinners, discuss management with your doctor well in advance.
- Arrange for a responsible adult to drive you home after the procedure.

Post-operative Instructions

- Rest for the remainder of the day following your procedure.
- You may resume normal activities and return to work the next day unless instructed otherwise.
- Avoid strenuous activities or heavy lifting for 24 hours.
- Apply ice to the injection sites if you experience discomfort.
- Contact our office if you develop a fever, severe pain, or any unusual symptoms.

Choosing A Discography Procedure Near You

Discography plays a crucial role in accurately diagnosing disc-related pain, potentially leading to more effective treatment strategies. If you're experiencing chronic back pain that hasn't responded to conservative treatments, discography might be an appropriate next step in your diagnostic journey.

We encourage you to consult with one of our [top Arizona physicians](#) at Desert Spine and Sports Physicians to determine if discography is right for you. Our team is committed to providing comprehensive, personalized care to help you find relief from your spine-related pain.

Visit us at one of our convenient locations:

[Desert Spine and Sports Physicians - Phoenix Office](#)

3700 N. 24th Street
Suite 210
Phoenix, AZ 85016

[Desert Spine and Sports Physicians - Mesa Office](#)

6634 E. Baseline Rd.
Suite 101
Mesa, AZ 85206

[Desert Spine and Sports Physicians - Scottsdale Office](#)

8670 E. Shea Blvd.
Suite 102
Scottsdale, AZ 85260

[Desert Spine and Sports Physicians - Peoria Office](#)

13128 N. 94th Drive
Suite 200
Peoria, AZ 85381

[Desert Spine and Sports Physicians - Gilbert Office](#)

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