

What is the purpose of this procedure?

Discography (also called a discogram) is a procedure used to evaluate painful spinal discs. It involves injecting a special dye visible on an x-ray into the discs in your spine to find out whether a damaged disc may be the source of your pain.

What are the risks associated with this procedure?

The risks are infrequent. They include:

- Allergic reaction to dye or medication
- Nerve damage (spinal cord and nerve roots)
- Bleeding and bruising at the injection site
- Infection
- Discitis (infection in the spinal discs)
- Worsening of your pain (in some cases)

How should I prepare for the procedure?

- You must have a driver with you at the time of check in and check out. Your driver must accompany you to the clinic for your procedure. You can be discharged only to the care of a responsible adult driver 18 or older.
- Do not eat within 6 hours before the procedure. Small amounts of clear liquids are ok up to 2 hours before the procedure. If you are a diabetic, be sure to discuss eating and medication schedule with your doctor.
- You may need to stop taking certain medications several days before the procedure. Please remind the doctor of all prescription and over-the-counter medications you take, including herbal and vitamin supplements. The doctor will tell you if and when you need to discontinue the medications.

- It is very important to tell the doctor if you have asthma or had an allergic reaction to the injected dye for a previous radiology exam (CT scan, angiogram, etc). An allergic reaction has symptoms such as hives, itchiness, difficulty breathing, or any treatment which required hospital stay. The doctor may prescribe medications for you to take before having the procedure.
- Tell the doctor if you develop a cold, fever, or flu symptoms before your scheduled appointment, or if you have started taking antibiotics for an infection.

What will happen during the procedure?

The procedure is performed on an outpatient basis in a special procedure room equipped with a fluoroscope (x-ray).

1. In the pre-procedure area the nurse or doctor will place an IV line. This is used for fluids and an antibiotic.
2. For your safety and comfort, when you get to the procedure room you will be connected to monitoring equipment (EKG monitor, blood pressure cuff, and blood oxygen monitoring device), and positioned on your stomach.
3. Your back is cleansed with an antiseptic soap then the doctor injects numbing medicine into your skin, this will cause a burning sensation for a few seconds.
4. The doctor then carefully directs a fine needle with help of the fluoroscope (x-ray) to the level of the disc. Some fluid and dye is injected into each disc to be tested. This may cause some pressure and pain. It is important to tell the doctor or nurse if this is your usual back pain, or if it is a different pain you have never felt before. If a particularly painful spot is found a local anesthetic will be injected into it to numb the pain.

What should I expect after the procedure?

The whole procedure will take about an hour. Afterwards you will spend 20-30 minutes in the recovery area before going home.

When should I call the clinic?

If you develop a fever, please call the clinic or seek medical evaluation as you may be developing an infection. The clinic phone number is (734) 615-7246.

Sometimes the back pain can worsen following the procedure. Over the counter pain-killers or your prescribed pain-killers can be taken to lessen the pain. Usually your pain returns to its typical level within 3-4 days following the procedure.

If you would like further information including videos of procedures, please visit our website: <http://www.umpain.com/>

Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by Michigan Medicine for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by Michigan Medicine and for which Michigan Medicine does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition or your treatment plan.

Patient Education by [Michigan Medicine](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](#). Last Revised 06/2018