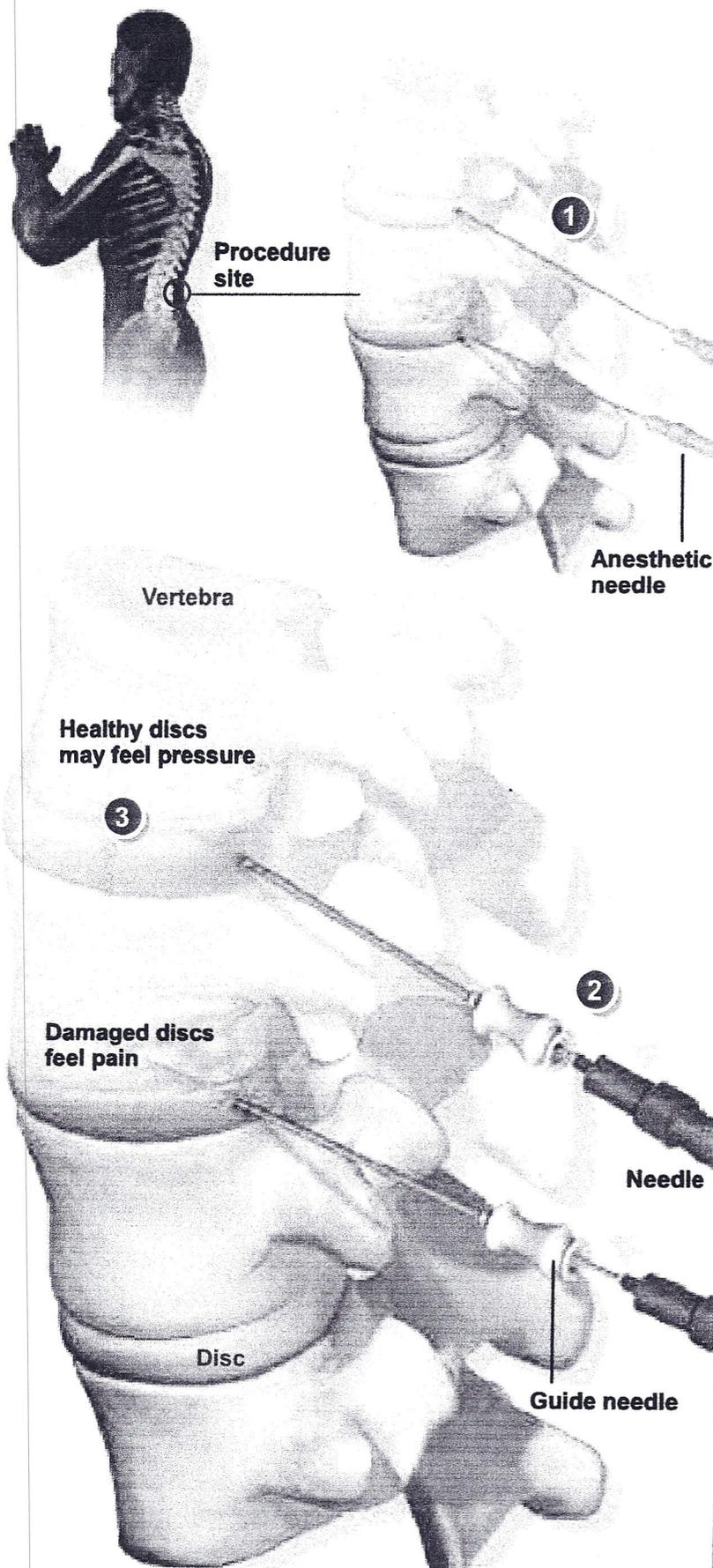


DISCOGRAPHY



Overview

Discography, also called discogram, is a diagnostic procedure used to determine if back pain is caused by one or more discs. The procedure involves pressurizing discs with an injection of sterile liquid to induce pain in the affected discs. Discography helps the specialist plan a course of treatment.

1. IV Inserted

Patients lie either on their side or stomach on a table equipped with a fluoroscopic (x-ray) unit. An intravenous (IV) line administers medication that relaxes the patient. It is important for patients to be awake enough to tell the doctor what they are feeling. A local anesthetic numbs the skin and all the tissue down to the disc area.

2. Guide Needles Inserted

Using fluoroscopy to identify the correct location, the doctor inserts a guide needle through the anesthetized track to the outer edge of the disc. A smaller needle is inserted through the guide needle into the center of the disc. This may be repeated for more than one disc.

3. Discs Tested

Once all the needles are placed, the discs are pressurized one at a time with injections of contrast dye. With each injection, patients feel either pressure or pain. If pain is felt, it is important for patients to compare it to the pain they had been experiencing. If it is the same, this may indicate a diseased disc.

Needles Removed

After each disc is tested, images are taken with the fluoroscopic unit. The needles are removed. Patients may be taken for a CT scan to obtain additional images of the inside of the discs.