

## River Cities Interventional Pain Specialists

Since 2004 Dr. Randall P. Brewer has been in clinical private practice in Shreveport, Louisiana and maintains academic appointments at Duke University and Louisiana State University, where he routinely lectures in the areas of Pain Medicine and clinical Neuroscience in the Department of Neurology and the Medical school. He is board certified by the American Society of Anesthesiologists, the American Board of Pain Medicine, and the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology.

Dr. Brewer and his multi-disciplinary team of highly skilled nurses and physician extenders provide comprehensive pain management treatment solutions to treat chronic pain disorders. The team works collaboratively with patients and area providers to develop individualized treatment plans and attainable goals. . These strategies help patients to effectively address a wide range of chronic pain disorders.

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## TOP TEN QUESTIONS ABOUT...



## LUMBAR DISCOGRAPHY

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## LUMBAR DISCOGRAPHY



### 1. What is discography?

Discography is a term that is used for the evaluation of one or more lumbar discs as a cause of low back pain. The procedure is a dye injection into the discs in the back.

### 2. What is a lumbar disc?

Lumbar discs are cartilage and connective tissue “spacers” in between the large bones in the lower spine.

### 3. How is discography performed?

An X-ray (fluoroscopic image) is taken of the back. With the patient lying on their stomach, a needle is placed into the center of the lumbar disc. While the needle is in the center of the disc, dye is injected into the disc. The characteristics of the dye in the center of the disc and the pressure in the disc are carefully observed. Your doctor will also talk to you about how much pain you feel during the injection of dye. Your doctor will give you local anesthetic during the placement of the needles through the skin. Some doctors give a light sedative during the discogram, but it is very important for you to be awake to be aware of what you are feeling.

### 4. Will the discogram give me relief if the pain is coming from the disc?

The discogram is considered a diagnostic test, and is designed to allow the doctor to determine whether the pain is coming from a particular disc in your low back.

### 5. How many discs will be tested?

The number of discs injected will be determined by your physician. Typically, three or more discs are tested to determine which of the discs are a cause of the pain.

### 6. If my MRI showed a disc problem, isn't that causing my pain?

Many abnormalities on MRI scans do not cause pain, even “severe” ones. Conversely, some discs which are undergoing the early process of degeneration can be very painful. The discogram allows the doctor to compare the discogram results with the MRI findings to determine the best course of therapy for the pain.

### 7. What will the pain feel like during the discogram? Aren't the needles painful also?

You will be given local anesthetic for the needle placement, and you may feel some pressure and slight pain during the final positioning of the needle. Typically, this initial pain is very brief and you should be able to carefully evaluate your pain during the dye injection. During the dye injection, you may not feel any pain or you may feel low back pain. The kind of pain that you feel during the injection of the dye into the disc will help your doctor better understand your pain.

### 8. What kind of pain will I feel when the dye is injected into the disc?

There are basically three types of outcomes from injecting the dye into the disc. Normal discs typically are not painful. Mild pressure may be felt, however, depending upon how much pressure is required to inject the dye. Some normal, and many abnormal discs, are sensitive and the injection of the dye may produce an unfamiliar pain. This pain is very important to distinguish from your normal pain. Your normal pain is what your doctor is most concerned about, and will be asking you to specifically rate your pain.

### 9. How do I rate the pain? How do I know when it is just pressure and not pain?

Your pain will be rated on a regular 0 to 10 scale. It will also be rated according to how similar, or familiar, it is to your normal pain. The pressure you may experience may or may not be a part of your normal pain experience. Many doctors directly measure the pressure during the injection of the dye and will carefully make sure that the injection pressure is controlled.

### 10. What happens after the discogram?

Following your discogram, you will be taken back to the recovery room and allowed to rest. You may require extra pain medicine in the recovery room, and possibly for a few days after the procedure. Placing ice on the injection sites will also help to reduce the pain from the procedure. Many doctors order a CT scan to immediately follow the discogram so that the pattern of dye in the disc can be precisely evaluated. Abnormal dye patterns indicate degeneration, tears, and herniations within the center of the discs.