



Intradiscal ElectroThermal Therapy

What is IDET Therapy?

With age or due to injury, cracks or fissures may develop in the wall of the disc. Filled with small nerve endings and blood vessels, these fissures are a chronic source of pain in many patients. Additionally, the inner disc tissue (nucleus) will frequently bulge (herniate) into these fissures in the outer region of the disc, likewise stimulating pain sensors within the disc.

IDET therapy is a minimally invasive treatment in which the physician applies controlled levels of thermal energy (heat) to a broad section of the affected disc wall. This heat contracts and thickens the collagen of the disc wall. Therapy may result in contraction or closure of the disc wall fissures and a reduction in the bulge of the inner disk material.

Who May Benefit from IDET Therapy?

IDET therapy acts exclusively upon the tissues of the disc itself, and should not be expected to relieve symptoms arising from other spinal structures, such as nerve roots or spinal joints. It is therefore very important for your physician to diagnose that the disc is the primary source of your back pain. In addition to a clinical examination, your physician may use Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) or injections of dye into the disc (discography) to confirm the diagnosis. Once satisfied that one or more discs are the primary source of your lower back pain, your physician may recommend IDET therapy.

The Procedure

IDET therapy is usually performed on an outpatient basis. Local anesthesia and mild sedation may be used to reduce discomfort during the procedure. You will be awake and alert so that you can provide important feedback to the physician. With the guidance of x-ray images, your physician will advance a needle into the disc. A catheter will be passed through the needle and into the disc.

Once it is in the appropriate position, the temperature of the heating section of the catheter will be gradually increased, raising the disc wall temperature. During the heating protocol, your physician will monitor your condition and comfort level closely. You will most probably feel a reproduction of your usual lower back pain. This is a strong indication that the heat is being applied to the appropriate areas. Once the therapy is completed, the catheter and needle are removed, and you will likely be sent home with a Band-Aid over the needle insertion site.

After the Procedure

The discomfort generated when the disc is heated may take several days to subside, and your physician may prescribe medication. During the disc healing process, up to 12 to 16 weeks following the procedure, it is very important to treat your discs with care. Your physician will provide you with activity and physical rehabilitation guidelines. Patients report that it is during this time that they usually begin to experience relief from their lower back pain symptoms, a reduction or elimination of any medication use, and an increase in their functional abilities. Improvements may continue up to 12 months following the procedure.

Important Information About IDET Therapy



IDET therapy, like any surgical procedure, has some risks. Not all patients will find relief for their back pain and relieved symptoms may recur over time. Other risks include, but are not limited to, bleeding, infection, increased pain, nerve injury and headache. Many additional factors may prevent your physician from recommending IDET therapy for your condition. Such factors may include, but are not limited to, very narrow disc height, severe disc herniation, spinal instability, very advanced stages of disc degeneration, or various general health concerns.