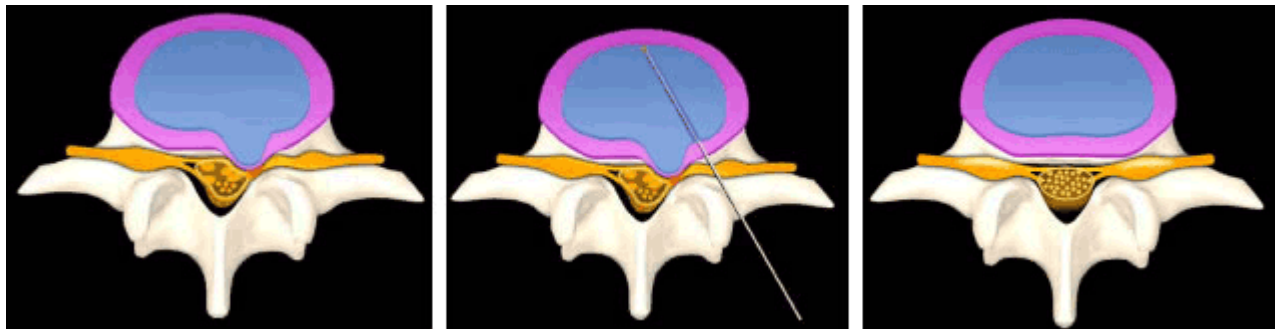


Percutaneous Disc Decompression or Nucleoplasty



Q1 WHAT IS IT? Nucleoplasty is a minimally invasive technique recently developed to treat leg or low back pain associated with contained herniated disc(s). Under fluoroscopic guidance, a small introducer needle is placed into the the target disc to act as a portal for a wand-like coblation device. The device uses radiofrequency energy to both vaporize and remove disc material and seal the channel created by each pass of the wand. Like removing fluid from a pressurized balloon, these channels decompress the disc and allow for a retraction of any disc protrusion or herniation that may be irritating nearby nerve roots.

Q2 DOES THE PROCEDURE HURT? You may feel a sense of pressure, or mild discomfort when the needle is inserted into the disc. The coblation is relatively painless otherwise. Your physician will closely monitor your comfort level during the entire procedure and provide medication as needed.

Q3 HOW MANY DISCS ARE TREATED? Based on your symptoms and your MRI, your doctor will determine which disc(s) may be causing your pain. A discogram may be needed to further localize which discs will be treated.

Q4 WILL I KNOW RIGHT AWAY IF THE PROCEDURE WORKED? Most patients experience improvement in leg symptoms faster than back symptoms. It may take several weeks before the final results are known.

Q5 CAN I EAT ON THE DAY OF THE PROCEDURE? No, you should not eat the day of your procedure. Small amounts of clear liquids are permitted. You should also arrange to have someone drive you home.

Q6 HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE? Nucleoplasty takes about 30 to 45 minutes, depending on the amount of disc material that needs to be removed.

Q7 DO I NEED TO BE PUT ASLEEP FOR THE PROCEDURE? No. This procedure is done under local anaesthesia because you need to be awake enough to tell the doctor what you are feeling. Most patients receive a mild sedative to help them relax and some pain medicine if necessary during the procedure.

Q8 WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT AFTER THE PROCEDURE? We advise patients to take it easy the day of the procedure. You may need to apply ice to the affected area for 20-30 minutes at a time for the next 48 hours. Your doctor will provide specific activity restrictions if indicated. Typically lengthy driving, lifting, bending/twisting at the waist are restricted in the first few weeks. Formal physical therapy may begin at 2-4 weeks post-procedure.

Q9 ARE THERE ANY POTENTIAL RISKS TO THE PROCEDURE? Generally speaking, this procedure is safe, however with any procedure there are associated risks, side effects, and complications. The most common side effect is temporary discomfort following the procedure. Other risks include damaging local nerves, infection, bleeding, and worsening of symptoms. Fortunately, because the procedure is performed with x-ray guidance in a controlled environment, serious side effects and complications are rare.

TEMPORARY SIDE-EFFECTS

You may experience increased pain after the anaesthetic wears off which may last 1-2 weeks. Use icepacks, simple analgesics or your normal pain medication as required.

You may experience a variety of symptoms including tingling, weakness or altered sensation over the next 1-2 weeks, which are usually mild and settle without treatment. The scientific literature reveals no reports of significant problems, which means the risk of long term problems from this procedure is very small and that you can be reassured that any minor discomfort will settle.

BRACES, ACTIVITY AND EXERCISE.

You do not need to wear a back brace after this procedure.

You may return to normal activities as tolerated after the procedure.

Avoid strenuous exercise for 1 week, then gradually increase your daily walking distance and range of activities as tolerated and formal physical therapy may begin at 2-4 weeks post-procedure.

POST PROCEDURE INSTRUCTIONS:

Because nucleoplasty (percutaneous disc decompression) is performed with twilight sedation anaesthetic, you must not drive, drink alcohol, operate dangerous equipment or sign important documents for 24 hours.

Report fevers >38°C, unexpected redness or severe pain, new numbness or weakness.

Apply ice to painful areas for 15-30 minutes per 4 hours for 24 to 48 hours.

Please make a review appointment 4-6 weeks.

More information is available at <http://www.fpmx.com.au/frankston-pain-management-services.html>