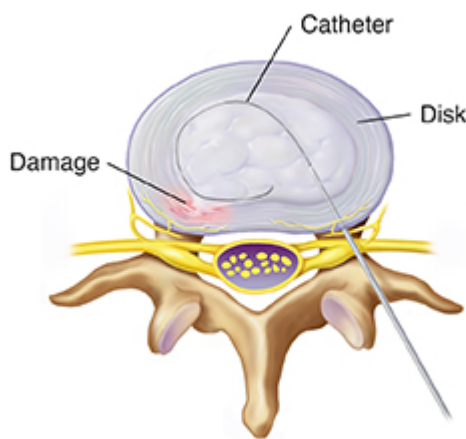

How Electrothermal Catheter Therapy Works

Low back and leg pain is often because of damage to 1 or more of the disks between the vertebrae. Electrothermal therapy, also called intradiscal electrothermal therapy, uses heat to change the structure of the tissue inside the disk. It doesn't relieve pain right away. Pain is reduced as the disk heals. After healing, the disk may also be stronger and more stable than before.

Inside the disk

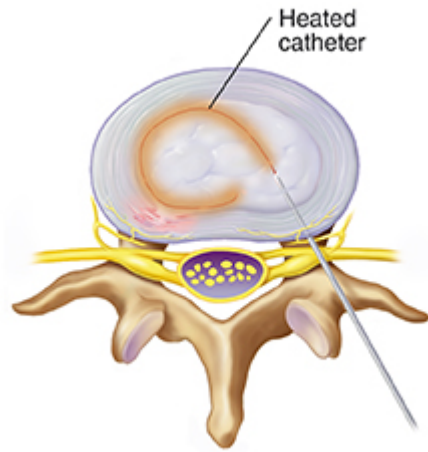
First, a needle is inserted into the disk. Then a special flexible wire (catheter) is threaded through the needle, so that it curves around the inside of the disk. When the catheter is in place, part of it is next to the damage in the disk.



Heating the disk

Once the catheter is in place, it's heated slowly to a high temperature. The catheter is kept at that temperature for a few minutes. Then it's removed. The heat may deaden nerves in the disk, preventing these nerves from causing pain. The heat may also make the disk shrink. This may mean that the disk no longer presses on nerves. The heated tissue will slowly heal over the next few months and form scar tissue. This scar tissue may:

- Plug any leak in the disk
- Make the disk stronger



Risks and possible complications

The risks and complications of electrothermal catheter therapy include:

- Bleeding
- Spinal fluid leak
- Infection
- Nerve damage
- Worsened pain after recovery
- No improvement of pain