

Directorate of Neurosciences

Myelogram information

Introduction

This information describes the test known as a Myelogram. This test is carried out in the Neuroradiology Department at the Royal Victoria Infirmary.

What is a Myelogram?

A myelogram is a specialised x-ray of the spine used to determine the cause of pain or numbness in the back, neck, arms or legs. An x-ray dye, called 'contrast agent' is injected into the spine allowing several sections of the spine to be studied at one time.

What happens before the test?

You may already be in hospital, if not you will be sent a date to come in for your test.

If any of the following apply to you, please ring the Neuroradiology Department for advice as soon as possible on 0191 282 5413 between 08.30 and 17.00 Monday to Friday.

- You take medication to thin your blood
- You are a diabetic or take Metformin
- You think you may be allergic to x-ray dye
- There is a possibility you may be pregnant

Most of your medicines you should take as normal. Please bring any medication or inhalers with you when you come into hospital.

We recommend that you eat a light breakfast or lunch before this test.

Before your myelogram the doctor will come to explain the procedure and its associated risks to you and answer any questions you may have. The doctor will ask for your written consent to perform the procedure.

Who will I meet?

- Radiologists are doctors who carry out and then interpret your myelogram. They write a report which will be sent back to the specialist who referred you.
- Radiographers are trained in all x-ray imaging and will be responsible for obtaining the images taken during your myelogram.
- Radiology nurses work with the radiologist during the procedure.

What happens during the test?

- You will be given an x-ray gown and pyjama bottoms to wear during the test.
- You will be taken to the myelogram theatre and asked to lie on the x-ray table where the radiologist will clean your back and give you an injection of local

anaesthetic to numb the area around the spine. The radiologist will then put a small spinal needle into the membrane surrounding the spinal cord and a special dye called 'contrast' will be injected through the needle in order to coat the spinal cord and nerve roots. The needle is then removed and a small dressing is applied.

- As the table may need to be tilted, to get the best images, we may ask you to wear safety straps.
- Several x-ray images will be taken. It is very important that you remain still in order that the best possible images can be obtained. We will then transfer you to the Neuroradiology CT scanner for further images to be taken with you lying on your back.

What happens when the test is finished?

The staff will advise you to sit upright and try to avoid bending forward for a few hours after the test. The contrast used during the test is a colourless liquid and will be passed from your body when you next pass urine.

What are the risks and side effects?

A common side effect of a myelogram is a headache, therefore in order to reduce the risk of this happening you will be advised to drink plenty of fluids once the test has been completed. Although not common, some people may experience nausea and sickness following this test.

Most side effects will resolve within a few hours following the myelogram. However if you continue to feel unwell contact your GP or the Neuroradiology Department. The whole procedure is likely to take about one hour and you will need to stay on the ward for a few hours afterwards. You will need to arrange for someone to collect you from hospital as you will not be able to drive home. You must not drive for 12 hours following your discharge from hospital.

How do I get my results?

The images will be examined by the radiologist once the test is finished and a report sent to the specialist who referred you for the test. That specialist will then arrange for you to receive the results.

If you have any questions concerning this test please ring the Neuroradiology Department on 0191 282 5413 (Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm).

Who to contact out of normal working hours

Between the hours of 8.30am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday please contact a nurse on ward 17 on 0191 2826017.

Outside these times please contact your GP.

Other contacts

Patient Advice and Liaison Service:

Freephone: 0800 0320202

Text: 01670 511098

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

Freepost: RLTC-SGHH-EGXJ

North of Tyne PALS

The Old Stables

Grey's Yard

Morpeth

NE61 1QD

This leaflet is available in alternative formats on request by telephoning 0191 2825413 (Monday to Friday 08.30 to 5pm)

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