

Patient information leaflet

Arthrogram

Radiology department

Introduction

We hope this guide will answer your questions about your arthrogram procedure. Please contact the team if you require further information via the details at the end of this leaflet.

What is an arthrogram?

An Arthrogram is an X-ray examination to look at the internal structures of a joint, such as hip, knee, shoulder, foot, wrist and hand.

It gives information on the bones, cartilage, ligaments, joint lining and surrounding muscles and tendons.

A small amount of Contrast medium (an iodine-based solution often known as X-ray dye) is injected into the joint to visualize the structure and the lining of the joint on X-rays.

The procedure is in two parts, both performed in one visit. The first part is performed in the main x-ray department. The second part will be performed using CT or MRI scanning.

Why do I need an arthrogram?

An arthrogram is a test that helps healthcare providers diagnose joint issues like hip or shoulder pain.

Who will be doing the arthrogram?

The doctors in charge of your case will have discussed the situation with the radiology department and have agreed that an arthrogram will be the best thing to do.

A radiologist will perform the procedure. A radiologist is a specialist in radiology and in interpreting the images produced. They will look at these images whilst performing the procedure.

Are there any risks?

X-ray radiation: All x-ray procedures involve exposure to radiation in varying amounts. The dose you get from a medical x-ray is very low and your doctor has determined that the benefits of having the examination outweigh potential risks.

The radiographer is present throughout your test making sure that the dose is kept as low as reasonably possible and the duration and level of x-rays are kept to a minimum.

Contrast medium: A very small number of patients have an allergic reaction to the contrast medium (x-ray dye). This can be minor, severe, or even life threatening but the chances of this occurring are very rare. If you get an itchy rash or difficulty breathing during

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the procedure tell a member of staff, the team will provide appropriate treatment.

Before your examination begins the radiographer will ask you a series of questions about your medical history, including any allergies you may have. This will help us assess if you are at risk of an allergic reaction to the x-ray dye.

Procedure: You may experience slight discomfort during the procedure but it should not be painful.

Infection: The injection into the joint is a sterile procedure, however there is a slight risk of infection for which we take every precaution. If you notice any pain, redness or swelling you should contact your GP.

Patients aged 12 to 55, could you be pregnant? X-rays can be harmful to an unborn baby and should be avoided by patients who are or may be pregnant. It is recommended that the examination is performed within 10 days of the first day of your menstrual period.

If your appointment is not within this time or if you think you may be pregnant, please contact the X-ray department before your appointment. When you arrive for your test, you will be asked when your last period started. If it is more than 10 days earlier, your appointment may be postponed.

Breastfeeding: On the day of your examination, you will be given an injection of contrast medium. These agents are low risk contrast agents. A very small percentage of the injected contrast may enter the breast milk but virtually none is absorbed across the gut of the infant.

No special precautions are required and you can carry on breastfeeding as normal. However, if you have any concerns you may want to express some breast milk prior to your appointment.

Preparation for an arthrogram

There is no preparation for this procedure. You may eat and drink as normal.

Please leave any valuables at home.

Please contact the booking team;

- If you plan to use hospital transport or require a hoist transfer
- If you are/may be pregnant
- If you are allergic to contrast medium (x-ray dye)
- If you weigh over 30 stone/190 kilograms
- If you require an interpreter – please inform us as soon as you receive your appointment letter, and we will arrange an interpreter for you.

If you are unsure or have questions about your preparation, contact your doctor or the X-ray department for advice.

Allergies

If you have any allergies you must inform your doctor. If you have previously reacted to contrast medium (x-ray dye) you must tell your doctor about this.

Medication

Please contact the radiology department if you are taking blood thinning medication (anti coagulants) such as Warfarin, Aspirin, Rivaroxaban, Dabigatran, Apixaban, Edoxaban or Clopidogrel, Ticagrelor. You may be asked to stop or be given alternative medication.

Getting to us

When attending The Princess Alexandra Hospital (Hamstel Road, Harlow, Essex, CM20 1QX), follow the signage to the radiology reception, which is located on the ground floor, green zone. Please let the receptionists know that you have arrived for your appointment.

When should I arrive?

Please arrive in the radiology department at your given appointment time. A notification through text or letter should have been sent to you to confirm this appointment.

Can someone stay with me in the hospital?

You may have a friend or relative attend with you, but they will be asked to stay in the waiting area while you have your procedure.

Children are not allowed in the waiting area unattended. Our staff are not permitted to supervise children, so please ensure child care arrangements are in place to avoid your tests being rescheduled.

The day of the procedure

You will be shown to a cubicle and asked to undress and put on a gown; You may also be asked to remove jewellery, dentures, glasses, or other metal objects, which may show up on the X-rays.

The procedure

Your identification will be checked by a nurse and radiographer, a brief history will be taken; please tell the radiologist what medication, severe allergies, choking episodes or other medical conditions, such as thyroid disease and diabetes you may have.

Before the procedure, the interventional radiologist will explain the procedure and ask you to sign a consent form.

Please feel free to ask any questions that you may have and, remember that even at this stage, you can decide against going ahead with the procedure if you so wish.

For the first part of the procedure, you will be made comfortable on the x-ray table. Your skin will be cleaned with an antiseptic skin preparation solution and local anaesthetic will be injected to anaesthetise the area.

A fine needle will be inserted into the joint under x-ray guidance so the contrast medium can be injected into the joint. A plaster is then applied. The second part of the procedure involves taking images, which is usually by MRI or CT scan.

Your nurse, radiographer and radiologist will be with you the whole time during the procedure and will explain what is happening or what you need to do on the day. If you have any questions or concerns, it is OK to ask.

How long will this take? The procedure can take up to an hour and the scan could take up to 45 minutes. Please expect to be in the department for up to 2 hours.

Is it uncomfortable? This procedure is not painful but, it can be uncomfortable.

After the procedure

You may experience some swelling and discomfort in the injected joint for 1-2 hours following the procedure. This may be eased with mild analgesics, such as paracetamol, if necessary and should resolve quickly.

Joint pain and stiffness should reduce over 48 hours. If the pain persists for more than this, please consult your GP.

Can I drive after my procedure?

We recommend that you do not drive for twenty-four hours and you ask a friend or relative to drive you home following your procedure.

How soon can I return to work?

We recommend you do not undertake strenuous activity and rest for the remainder of the day.

What do I do if I feel unwell after I have gone home?

If you feel unwell after your procedure, you should seek medical advice from your GP/ hospital doctor or through the emergency department and inform them that you have had a procedure.

When will I get my results?

You will not know the results of your examination immediately. The radiologist will report their findings to the clinician who arranged your procedure, who will discuss the results with you. It may take a couple of weeks for the results to become available.

Contacting the team

If you have any further questions about your procedure or an existing appointment, please contact the radiology department (**Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm**) at **01279 82 2527 or 3405**

If you have any queries **outside of working hours (after 4pm and on weekends)**, you will be redirected to the main radiology reception.

Please note appointment bookings cannot be made during this time.

Your feedback matters

If you would like to give feedback on your care, please contact our patient experience team at paht.pals@nhs.net or **01279 827211**.

Please contact the communications team at paht.communications@nhs.net if you would like this leaflet in another language or format.