

Patient information leaflet

Myelogram

Radiology department

Introduction

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

What is a myelogram?

A myelogram is a special X-ray examination using both fluoroscopy and/ or CT images of the spine, with the help of x-ray dye (contrast medium) and is often used to investigate possible herniated discs or spinal canal narrowing.

The images show the fluid filled space (subarachnoid space) around the nerves in your spinal canal. The examination will be carried out by a radiologist who may be assisted by a radiographer and possibly a radiology nurse.

Why do I need a myelogram procedure?

A myelogram maybe performed when another type of exam such as a standard x-ray does not give clear answers about the cause of back or spine problems.

It is also used in patients who cannot go through MRI scans.

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 water-soluble enema 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.

Procedure: There is a very small risk of an infection being introduced during this procedure; a headache for several hours after the procedure is common.

There is a small risk of bleeding and nerve root irritation from having a needle inserted into your spinal canal.

Contrast: Very rarely, you may have an allergic reaction to the contrast medium (dye).

At any point during or after the examination, if you develop itching or difficulty breathing, tell your radiographer or doctor immediately, treatment will be provided.

Patients aged 12– 55 years, 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 examination, you will be asked when your last period started. If it is more than 10 days earlier, your appointment may be postponed.

Breastfeeding: 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.

Will I need an injection?

Occasionally, patients are given antibiotics, sedative and painkillers through a cannula placed in your arm.

Preparing for your procedure

You will have had some special blood tests to check your blood clotting ability before your procedure.

If you have a high fever and are feeling unwell such as flu, the procedure may need to be postponed. However, if you have a common cold this will not affect the procedure.

You may eat and drink normally.

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

Please leave any jewellery or valuables at home.

Please contact the booking team before your appointment if:

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

Allergies

If you have asthma or any allergies, especially to iodine or X-ray contrast (CT or coronary angiogram dye), please inform us in advance.

Medication

Please continue to take all medications as usual prior to your examination. If you are taking anti-coagulants (blood thinners) such as Warfarin or Aspirin please contact the radiology nurse on the number below.

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; please bring a dressing gown if you have one. 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.

You will lie on the X-ray table, generally on your left side or to sit on the edge of the x-ray table with your feet on a step and leant forward. These positions open the spaces between the vertebrae (bones) in your spine to allow a spinal needle to be inserted into your spinal canal. This is called a lumbar puncture.

The procedure is performed under sterile conditions and the interventional radiologist and radiology nurse will wear sterile gowns and gloves.

The skin will be cleaned with antiseptic skin preparation. Local anaesthetic will be injected into the skin to numb the area before the spinal needle is inserted.

A small amount of spinal fluid may be collected through the spinal needle and sent for analysis.

Contrast medium (a colourless fluid that shows on x-ray images) will be injected through the spinal needle into your spinal canal.

The spinal needle will be removed, and a small plaster dressing will be put over the injection site.

You may be asked to turn several times whilst on the x-ray table to help ensure the contrast agent reaches the affected areas of the spine.

The X-ray table may be tilted, and further X-ray images taken.

You may also be transferred back onto your bed and taken to the CT scanner for further images.

You will be asked to lie still during the CT scan or you may be given some breathing instructions. The radiographer performing the scan will inform you before they start. The CT scan takes a few minutes.

After the procedure

You will be taken back to the ward. Nursing staff will carry out routine observations including pulse and blood pressure and will also check the treatment site.

You will generally stay in bed for 3-4 hours and then you will be able to go home. Take it easy for the rest of the day but you can resume normal activities the next day.

Can I drive after my procedure?

No, it is important that you have a responsible adult to escort you home. You must not drive or use public transport for the journey home.

How soon can I return to work?

It is recommended that you rest for the remainder of the day. Avoid heavy lifting and gym exercise. You can return back to work after 48 hours.

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 usually takes 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 / 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.