



Arthrogram

How to prepare for your procedure

An arthrogram is an exam of a joint using contrast material and X-rays to view the soft tissue and joint structures. Read this handout to learn about how the exam works, how to prepare for the exam, how the exam is performed, what to expect during the exam, and how to get your results.

What is an arthrogram?

An arthrogram is an X-ray exam of a joint after the injection of a dye-like contrast material and/or air to outline the soft tissue and joint structures on the pictures.

How does the exam work?

Joint fluid is removed and replaced with injected contrast material or air – sometimes both. A series of pictures are taken before the joint tissue absorbs the contrast material. Sometimes the radiologist will take more X-rays while pushing and pulling on your joint.

How should I prepare for the exam?

- No special steps are needed before an arthrogram.
- Food and fluid intake do not need to be restricted.
- A technologist may ask you to change into a gown.
- You may need to remove your jewelry if it will affect the exam.

How is the procedure performed?

1. In the X-ray exam room, you will be placed on a table.
2. Simple X-ray pictures of your joint are taken to compare with the arthrograms.
3. The skin around your joint is washed with antiseptic, and a local anesthetic may be injected into the area around the joint.
4. A needle is then placed into the joint space. The radiologist will use a syringe to drain the joint fluid, which may be sent to a lab for review.

Questions?

Call Roosevelt
Radiology Nurse:
206-598-6622

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC Clinic staff are also available to help at any time.

Roosevelt Clinic:
206-598-6868

5. The syringe is replaced with one containing contrast material. If the fluoroscopic exam shows correct needle placement, the contrast material and air are injected into the joint space.
6. After the injection, the needle is removed and the site is rubbed with a sterile sponge and may be sealed to prevent air from escaping.
7. You will be asked to move the joint to more evenly dispense the contrast material. Still pictures are then taken with the joint in a range of positions.
8. The exam usually takes 45 to 60 minutes.

What will I feel during the exam?

- After you are given an anesthetic to numb the area, you may not feel anything during the exam.
- At first, you may feel a slight pinprick and burning as the anesthesia is injected into the joint.
- You may also feel a fullness as the joint is filled, and you may feel and hear gurgling as the joint is moved.

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

A radiologist trained to interpret arthrograms will review the pictures and send a report to your doctor, who will give you your test results. The radiologist will not discuss the results with you. Based on the findings, you and your primary care doctor will decide the next step, such as treatment for a problem, as needed.

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