



Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) Arthrograms

This brochure describes the MRI arthrogram procedure: how to prepare, what to expect, and after care instructions.

What is an MRI arthrogram?

MRI arthrography is an imaging study using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). This exam demonstrates more detail of the interior of the joint than standard MRI.

- *MRI* – A specialized diagnostic imaging study done to obtain high quality images of the ligaments, tendons, and cartilage that reinforce the joint to help find the source of your current problem.
- *Arthrogram* – An imaging study involving injection of a contrast agent into the problem joint.
- *Contrast agent* – Sometimes called “radiology dye,” used to highlight certain areas of the body during imaging exams. The dye that is injected into the joint is clear with a water-like consistency.

Why is an MRI arthrogram being done?

Although MRI without contrast is quite useful in many cases, certain joints and certain problems require injecting contrast into the joint, as in your case. Your doctor feels that the MRI arthrogram is one way to obtain information and images of the area of concern. The information obtained during this procedure will help guide future treatment options, and may also be used to keep tabs on a condition that you already have and are perhaps being treated for.

How is the procedure performed?

The first part of the procedure will be done in a special procedure room in the radiology department. Your skin will be cleaned with an antiseptic soap. Using a needle, the radiologist will then anesthetize the area using a local anesthetic. After the area is numb a needle will be placed into the joint space using fluoroscopy. When the needle is in the correct place, the contrast will be injected and a number of X-ray images will be taken. This part of your study will take about 30 minutes, after which you will be sent to the MRI scanner for the rest of your study. The MRI may take as long as 45 minutes.

- *Local anesthesia* – The loss of sensation, especially that of pain, only in the area of the body where an anesthetic drug is applied or injected.
- *Fluoroscopy* – An X-ray machine that allows the radiologist to see images in real time.

What the Radiology Department Needs to Know

Please call 24 hours in advance of your exam if you need to reschedule or if you answer “yes” to any of these questions:

- Are you allergic to X-ray “dye” (iodine contrast material; MRI contrast material)?
- Are you allergic to local anesthetics such as lidocaine or novacaine?
- Do you have diabetes?
- Do you take Coumadin or other blood thinners?
- Are you being treated now for any kind of infection?
- Do you have a history of claustrophobia?
- Do you have any metal in your body such as a pacemaker, aneurysm clips, artificial heart valves, hearing aids, medication pumps, dentures, orthopedic items such as pins, rods, wires, plates, and/or any shrapnel or gun shot fragments?
- For women, are you using an IUD or diaphragm, breastfeeding an infant, pregnant or suspect that you are pregnant?

Preparing for Your MRI Arthrogram

- **You will meet with the doctors before the study.**
- **Bring a list of all medications that you are taking.**
- **Prepare any questions you might have and ask them at this time.**
- **You must give written consent before the MRI can begin.**

Questions?

Call 206-598-6868

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 Radiology:
206-598-6868

After Your MRI Arthrogram

You may leave the department right after your MRI. Restrict yourself to light activity the rest of the day. You may resume normal activities the next day. Your joints may be stiff or sore the next day, but this should get better in one or two days. If you have significant pain after the test, please contact us or your referring doctor right away. A rare, but possible problem is joint infection, which should be treated right away.

Obtaining Your Test Results

The findings from your test are reviewed and interpreted by the radiologist. These results will be given to your referring doctor, who will share them with you during your follow-up visit.

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