

# MR and CT Arthrogram

An information guide



# MR and CT Athrogram

## What is an arthrogram?

An arthrogram is a procedure used to examine the inner structures of your joint to help your doctor plan your treatment. We do two things; an injection of special dye into your affected joint using an X-ray machine to guide us and then we take pictures with an MRI/CT scanner.

## Why am I having this done?

It has been arranged following a discussion between your consultant/specialist and our radiologist. An arthrogram is more accurate than a standard MRI/CT scan in assessing the internal structures of your joint.

## Is there any preparation needed?

There is no special preparation required and you should take your normal prescribed medications as usual. **However, please bring your warfarin card to your appointment if you are on the blood thinner warfarin**, as we would want to see that your latest INR is at least within the treatment range.

If you are on tablets such as Xarelto® (**rivaroxaban**), Pradaxa® (**dabigatran**), or Eliquis® (**apixaban**) or similar for an irregular heartbeat (atrial fibrillation), we would advise you to leave at least 24 hours between the last tablet and the injection, to minimise the risk of bleeding into the joint.

If you are on **rivaroxaban** for a deep vein or lung blood clot (deep vein thrombosis or pulmonary embolism) and/or are known to have impaired kidney function, the benefits from having the injection over the risks (bleeding into the joint or further blood clots) are a lot less clear and will need to be discussed with you on an individual basis. If blood-thinning treatment for this reason is for a limited time only, it would be safest to consider putting off the injection until your other treatment has finished.

Other blood thinners such as **aspirin** and **clopidogrel** are of less concern but do let us know which ones you take when you attend for your appointment.

**Our advice to you is to NOT drive yourself to or from the appointment even if you feel well enough, as the administration of a local anaesthetic in your limbs will likely invalidate your car insurance for at least the remainder of the day. Please make other arrangements.**

**The responsibility is entirely yours whether or not you choose to follow this advice.**

### **Important Information**

As far as is known at present, this is an extremely safe procedure. It does not involve the use of x-rays. You are placed in a very powerful magnetic field. If you have any small pieces of metal inside your body, you should inform the radiographer as in some cases you may not be able to have the examination.

If you have a history of metal fragments in your eyes, you may need an x-ray done to prove there are no fragments remaining. If you have a pacemaker, metal heart valves or a metallic clip in your brain, there is a risk that these may be affected during an MR scan, and a different examination will need to be arranged instead.

For female patients, if you are or might be pregnant, you must make sure the doctor referring you or a member of staff in the radiology department knows as soon as possible.

MRI scans are not advisable in early pregnancy unless there are special circumstances.

If you are having a CT arthrogram then the radiographers will check to see if there is any possibility that you could be pregnant. A CT scan does use radiation, however the dose is kept to a minimum for this procedure.

### **What happens during the examination**

Before the procedure, the doctor will explain the examination and ask you to sign a consent form.

- After this you will be asked to change into a hospital gown.
- The doctor will then clean the area and inject the skin with local anaesthetic.
- A special dye (iodinated contrast) that can be seen on x-rays will then be injected into the joint to check the needle is in the correct position.
- Once this is done the other special dye (gadolinium) that can be seen on MRI is injected.
- If this is in a satisfactory position then you will be escorted to the MR/CT scanner for the scan.

## **Will it be uncomfortable?**

This can vary from patient to patient but you will feel a pinprick when the needle for the local anaesthetic is inserted into the skin. When the local anaesthetic is injected you may feel a stinging sensation. Also when the special dye is injected, the joint may begin to feel “full” or under pressure. Do not worry. This is normal. However if you are in severe discomfort please let the doctor know.

## **How long will it take?**

We allow 30 minutes for the injection part of the examination which includes the explanation and signing of the consent form. We try and get you onto the scanner as soon as possible after injection and once on it, allow another up to 45 minutes for the imaging part of the examination. It is important that you remain as still as possible throughout, as movement will reduce the quality of the pictures and make it difficult to give your doctor or specialist a diagnosis.

## **What problems can occur?**

- This is a common examination and it is done under sterile conditions. However there is a small risk of infection being introduced into the joint. If this occurs then you will notice an increase in pain and the area may become red or swollen.
- You may get a bruise at the site of injection.
- There is also a small risk of an allergic reaction to the dye we use. If you are known to have an allergy then please let us know.
- Joint pain and stiffness should reduce after 24 to 48 hours and return to normal.
- Injury to the blood vessels and the nerve close to the joint is rare and every effort is made to avoid this.

### **What we need to know :**

- Are you allergic to the contrast (special dye)?
- Do you have diabetes?
- Do you take blood thinners such as warfarin?
- If you are female, is there any possibility of you being pregnant?
- Do you have any other allergies?

### **How do I get my results?**

The results will be sent to the doctor or specialist that requested your scan. You can discuss the results with them once they are available.



**If English is not your first language and you need help, please contact the Interpretation and Translation Service**

Jeśli angielski nie jest twoim pierwszym językiem i potrzebujesz pomocy, skontaktuj się z działem tłumaczeń ustnych i pisemnych

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