Royal Berkshire
NHS Foundation Trust

Having a CT myelogram

This leaflet explains what happens during a CT myelogram examination in the Radiology (X-ray) Department at the Royal Berkshire Hospital. The examination is conducted by a consultant radiologist (specialist X-ray doctor) and a radiographer (X-ray professional).

Before the CT myelogram

Your consultant has referred you for a CT myelogram. You will have been referred for this if you are unable to have an MRI scan due to claustrophobia or it is contra-indicated (not suitable). This might be for example because you have an electronic implanted device in your body, for example a pacemaker.

You may eat and drink normally and continue to take any medication that you have been prescribed, excluding any medication that thins your blood. If you take any medication which thins your blood (e.g. warfarin), you must contact the X-ray nurses on 0118 322 8368 to check whether this should be stopped.

Please bring your appointment letter with you.

The procedure involves you being admitted to a day bed in the X-ray department for the morning.

What is a CT myelogram and why do I need one?

CT stands for Computerised Tomography. It uses X-rays and a computer to create detailed images of the inside of your body.

This is a diagnostic X-ray examination to look at your spine and spinal cord in order to further investigate any previous diagnosis (pathology) of your spinal cord.

The CT scanner consists of an X-ray tube that rotates around your body. You will usually be moved continuously through the scanner as it takes the pictures. The X-rays pass through your body and hit a series of detectors opposite the tube, which then generate the pictures via a complex computer.

Are there any risks with this test?

You will always be asked on the day if you are allergic to iodine (the intravenous contrast), but if you know you are allergic when you receive your appointment, please contact the Radiology Department on 0118 322 8368 to notify us.

This procedure is designed to be as least invasive as possible. Normally, it is performed using local anaesthetic, which is a small injection to numb the skin. This should mean that you will experience a ‘pushing’ sensation rather than pain.

Since a needle is being inserted into your body, bleeding is a possibility. This is why we check (with a blood test) how well your blood is clotting prior to the procedure.

Infection is another possibility, as a result of the procedure, but this is extremely rare. The procedure is performed under strict sterile conditions to minimise this risk.

The scanner uses ionising radiation (x-rays) to produce the pictures. The scanner protocols are reviewed and optimised and the radiographers are trained to ensure the dose you receive is as low as practically possible.

Prior to the scan

The radiologist will inject a small amount of X-ray contrast into your spinal canal. This is done under local anaesthetic to minimise any discomfort you might feel. You will then return to the day bed for approximately one hour before being taken to the CT scanner.

What happens during the CT?

- We will then take you to the CT scanner to image your back. You may be asked to roll over a couple of times to help disperse the contrast just prior to scanning. The scan will normally take place with you lying on your stomach. If this is not possible, it will be done with you lying on your back.
- The CT scanner produces images of the inside of your body that are like slices in a loaf of bread.
- The scan is painless and only takes a few seconds.

After the CT scan

Once the scan is finished, you will be able to go home. We recommend that you have someone to drive you as you may have some discomfort in your back following the procedure.

Results

We will send a report of your examination to your referring doctor; if this is a hospital specialist, then the specialist will contact your GP with the report.

Contacting us

Radiology Department Tel 0118 322 7991

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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