

# CT MYELOGRAM

A *CT Myelogram* is actually two tests that can have value together. A **CT scan** is used to help diagnose various spinal conditions including disc herniation, spinal stenosis, tumor and vertebral fracture. The scan provides a radiographic image of a single body plane. It is particularly helpful at imaging hard tissue such as bony structures. The scanning system includes the use of a computer that creates pictures in cross-sections or slices of a specific part of your spine. These images are not possible with traditional x-rays. The equipment used is shaped like a donut or ring with a moveable table within it that slides in and out of the ring. This is a painless procedure.

A **myelogram** is a diagnostic tool that uses radiographic contrast dye that is injected into the spinal canal's fluid (cerebrospinal fluid or CSF). After the dye is injected, the contrast serves to illuminate the spinal canal, cord and nerve roots during imaging.

When these imaging procedures are done together, they will reveal images that clearly show both bony spinal and nerve structures, which are helpful to the physician as they diagnose the problem.

## What Can You Expect?

A CT Myelogram is often performed in a hospital x-ray department or special imaging center. To prepare for your test:

1. You will need transportation after the procedure. No driving immediately following the procedure.
2. Do not eat or drink anything after midnight the night before the test.
3. Take any usual medications with a little water the morning of the procedure.

4. Tell your provider if you take blood thinners (anticoagulants), including aspirin.
5. Leave any valuables at home.
6. If you have had prior x-rays, CT scan or MRI, bring a copy to the test facility.

## Special Considerations Prior to the Procedure

1. Those who take medications for diabetes or seizures or blood thinners must discuss the need for these medications with the referring physician prior to testing. Some drugs may need to be stopped for 24-48 hours before the test.
2. If you are pregnant or allergy to IVP or other contrast dye, angina, kidney disorder, epilepsy or seizure. You should also inform the radiology technician of all medications taken, including dose and frequency.

## During Your Test

For the first test (myelogram), a contrast dye will be injected into the spine followed by taking some pictures. To have this done, you will be positioned on your back or side on the table that slides into the CT scanner. The skin is prepared with an antiseptic to prevent infection. Then a local anesthetic is injected to numb the skin (prior to the injection of the dye). The injection of the contrast dye is called a cervical or lumbar "puncture" or "spinal tap". In other words, some the spinal fluid is removed and replaced with the same amount of contrast dye. You are properly positioned for the injection of the dye. For a cervical puncture, you are positioned on your back; for a lumbar puncture, you would be positioned

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on your side with your knees tucked up under your chin or as close to the chin as possible. Bringing your knees under the chin or a sitting position creates more space between the vertebrae.

Once the dye is injected, the radiology technician may tilt the table to help move the contrast dye where it is needed. There are several images taken once the dye is in the needed areas.

#### **After the Procedure**

You will be transferred to an observation area for awhile. Following this observation period, you will have someone drive you home.

1. Keep your head elevated. Do not bend over or lie flat. This will keep the contrast material out of your head.
2. Rest for several hours and drink plenty of fluids.
3. No exercise the same day as the procedure.
4. Notify your physician if you experience any of the following: increased headache, increased drowsiness, fever, seizures or weakness in your arms or legs.

#### **What are the Risks of CT/Myelography?**

There are risks associated with myelography; however, most patients do not experience any side effects. The most common side effect is headache which usually clears up within 1-2 days with rest and fluids. Other side effects can include nausea, dizziness, generalized aching or rarely, seizure, infection, or nerve injury.

#### **Remember—**

CT scanning with myelography can be helpful and necessary for fully diagnosing your problem. It is normal to have feelings of anxiety before and during the procedure. Feel free to discuss any concerns about the procedure with us. ☐

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