

# Myelogram

## Why is it done ?

A myelogram is an imaging procedure that examines the relationship between your vertebrae and discs, through your spinal cord, nerves and nerve roots. It determines whether there's anything actively pressing against your spinal cord, nerves or nerve roots, causing pain in your back or numbness and weakness in your arms and/or legs. Before the test, a radiologist will inject a contrast medium (also called contrast material or dye) into your spinal canal through your lower back. Then, the radiologist may take a few X-rays of your spine (you can get more detailed information through a computed tomography (CT) scan of your spine after the injection). The dye will blend together with your spinal fluid, giving the surgeon or neurologist a clear look at the bones and soft tissues that might be causing your symptoms.

A myelogram test may be performed along with other spinal exams, such as a CT scan and regular spinal X-rays.

A myelogram is done to check for:

- The cause of arm or leg numbness, weakness, or persistent pain.
- Narrowing of the spinal canal (spinal stenosis).
- A tumor or infection causing problems with the spinal cord or nerve roots.
- A spinal disc that has ruptured (herniated disc).
- Inflammation of the membrane that covers the brain and spinal cord.
- Problems with the blood vessels to the spine.

## How to prepare:

***Please tell the technologist if you have an insulin pump.***

- Tell your doctor ALL the medicines, vitamins, supplements, and herbal remedies you take. Some may increase the risk of problems during your test. Your doctor will tell you if you should stop taking any of them before the test and how soon to do it.
- If you take aspirin or some other blood thinner, ask your doctor if you should stop taking it before your test. Make sure that you understand exactly what your doctor wants you to do. These medicines increase the risk of bleeding.
- You will be asked to sign a consent form that says you understand the risks of the test and agree to have it done.

## What to expect during the test:

Depending on your situation, a Myelogram may take place as an outpatient procedure (you go home the same day) or in the hospital. If you have an outpatient procedure, someone needs to drive you home afterward. The procedure itself only takes 30-45 minutes.

For the procedure, you will be laying on your stomach on an xray table so that the machine can take pictures of your spine. A Radiologist will be performing the procedure. During a spinal tap part, your provider:

- Cleans your skin with an antiseptic.
- Injects a local anesthetic into your lower back to numb the area. You might feel a slight burning sensation.
- Inserts a thin, hollow needle between two vertebrae (spinal bones) in the lower part of the spine. You may feel some pressure.
- Injects the dye/contrast material
- Gently withdraws the needle.
- will cover the puncture site with a bandage.

You will lay flat on your back, or head slightly elevated, will be transferred to the CT scanner for more detailed imaging.

Normally you will be discharged in about 4 hours. Please make transportation arrangements, as you should not be driving immediately after a myelogram.

#### **What to expect after the test:**

You should get plenty of rest and fluids afterward. Caffeinated beverages are suggested to minimize chance of a headache. But you should avoid strenuous exercise or activities for 24 to 48 hours.

- Your physician will discuss the test results with you.