

# Arthrogram

**Why is it done ?** An arthrogram is an X-ray image or picture of the inside of a joint (typically, shoulder, hip, knee, wrist, ankle) after a contrast medium (sometimes referred to as a contrast agent or “dye”) is injected into the joint. An arthrogram provides a clear image of the soft tissue in the joint (e.g. ligaments and cartilage) so that a more accurate diagnosis about an injury or cause of a symptom, such as joint pain or swelling, can be made.

**How to prepare:**

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

**What to expect during the test:** You will be asked to lie down and the skin over the joint being examined will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution. A local anesthetic may be injected into the skin to numb the area where the contrast medium will be injected. You may feel a slight stinging sensation.

Using X-ray, for guidance, a Radiologist will place a needle into the joint, and after ensuring the needle is in the right place, the contrast medium will be injected.

The injection may give you a feeling of fullness in the joint but should not be painful. If the arthrogram test uses X-rays (fluoroscopy or CT), this is generally iodinated contrast medium. Occasionally, a CT arthrogram will involve an injection of air either on its own or with a small amount of X-ray contrast medium.

If you are having an MRI arthrogram, the injection will be a very diluted mixture of MRI contrast medium (gadolinium), iodinated contrast, together with sterile saline.

After having the injection you will be taken to either an MRI suite (for an MRI arthrogram) or a CT suite (for a CT arthrogram), where detailed imaging of the joint will be done.

Many people referred for an arthrogram have symptoms of a sore joint. There can be some mild-to-moderate increase in soreness in the joint for 24–48 hours after the injection. The joint will then return to feeling the way it was before the test.

**How long does an arthrogram take?**

The injection of contrast medium usually takes about 15 minutes. You may then have to wait a short time before having the additional imaging of your joint. An MRI scan may take 30–45 minutes and a CT scan may take 15 minutes, depending on the joint and the number of scans that have to be done. You should allow approximately 2 hours from arrival at the radiology department.

**What to expect after the test:**

- you can resume your usual activities and normal diet immediately.
- The results of your exam should be available to your physician within 24-48 hours after the test, Monday through Friday.
- Your physician will discuss the test results with you.