This handout gives instructions to follow if you have a delayed reaction after receiving contrast (X-ray dye) through a vein during an imaging study.

What is IV contrast?

Contrast is a dye that may be given before imaging studies such as computed tomography (CT) scans, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans, or angiography exams (X-rays of blood or lymph vessels).

Contrast helps veins, arteries, some organs, and other body tissues show up more clearly on the images. Contrast injected into a vein is called IV contrast.

What should I do after an IV contrast study?

After having an injection of contrast, drink extra fluids to help your body flush the contrast from your system. Drink 2 or 3 extra glasses of water in the first 4 hours after your scan.

What is a contrast reaction?

A contrast reaction is an allergic reaction to the contrast. These reactions do not happen very often, but they can range from mild to life-threatening.

Symptoms of contrast reaction include:

- Sneezing
- Hives or an itchy feeling
- Tightness in your throat, or having a hard time breathing (anaphylaxis)

These reactions may occur right after the contrast is injected or several hours later, after you have left the clinic or medical center.
Do I need treatment for mild symptoms?

If you have any reaction at all, you must seek treatment:

- See a healthcare professional right away. Do not ignore any sign of a reaction, even if it seems mild.
- If the reaction occurs after you have left the clinic or medical center, see below.
- You may need medicine to treat your reaction or to keep it from getting worse.

What if my symptoms occur after I leave the clinic or medical center?

If you feel you are having a reaction after you leave the clinic or medical center, and your symptoms are:

- **Mild** (you feel itchy or you are sneezing, or both):
  - Call the phone number for your facility, listed in the “Questions” box on this page. Ask to speak with a radiologist.
  - Explain that you recently had an IV contrast study and what symptoms you are having. The radiologist will tell you what to do next.

- **More severe** (if you are having a hard time breathing or have tightness in your throat):
  - Go to the nearest Emergency Department right away.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

- **UW Medical Center Imaging Services**: 206.598.6200
- **UW Medical Center Roosevelt Clinic Radiology**: 206.598.6868
- **Harborview Medical Center Imaging Services**: 206.744.3105
- **Seattle Cancer Care Alliance**: 206.288.7200