

MRI: Arthrogram

How to prepare and what to expect

This handout explains how an MRI arthrogram works, how to prepare for it, what to expect during the scan, and how to get your results.

What is an MRI scan?

MRI stands for *magnetic resonance imaging*. MRI uses a powerful magnetic field, radio frequency pulses, and a computer to take detailed pictures of organs, soft tissues (muscles and nerves), bones, and other internal body parts.

What is an arthrogram?

An *arthrogram* is an X-ray scan of your joints. An MRI arthrogram includes both an arthrogram and an MRI. Joints such as knee, hip, and shoulder have 2 bones that fit closely together. Other tissues (cartilage, tendons, and ligaments) support and cushion your joints. An MRI arthrogram helps your doctor see small tears or other problems in these tissues. The results of this scan will help guide your treatment.

During your arthrogram, we'll inject a special contrast mix of X-ray contrast (Iovue), MRI contrast (Gadolinium), and a small amount of numbing medicine (lidocaine) into your joint. This helps the radiologist see inside your joint clearly on both X-ray and MRI. The injection is guided by a live X-ray machine (fluoroscope) to make sure the contrast goes in the right spot.



The contrast dye will help your radiologist see inside your joint.

MRI Screening

Because the strong MRI magnet will pull on certain metals or implants, we need to know if you have any metal on or in your body. We also need to know certain things about your health.

To keep you safe and to prevent a delay or cancellation of your exam, it is important to tell your team coordinator and MRI department if you have **any** of the following:

- Pacemaker or defibrillator
- Cerebral (brain) aneurysm clip
- Cochlear or ear implant
- Orthopedic hardware or metal in the area we are scanning



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- Implanted or external drug pump (including chemotherapy)
- Breast tissue expander
- Bullet or shrapnel in your body
- Neurostimulator
- Dialysis or renal failure
- Allergy to gadolinium
- Continuous glucose monitor (CGM)
- Medication patches
- Penile implant
- Programmable shunt
- Tattoos placed within 2 weeks of your MRI appointment

How do I prepare?

- Please talk with your referring provider if you have any concerns about managing pain or anxiety during your MRI scan.
- Tell your provider if you are pregnant, or if there is any chance you could be pregnant.

What happens during your MRI appointment?

Part 1: The Arthrogram

- You will fill out an “MRI Patient Screening Form.” This form asks questions about your health and medical devices.
- We will give you a hospital gown and pants to change into.
- You must remove jewelry and metal hair products.
- We will clean your skin with antiseptic soap.
- The radiologist will then use a needle to numb the area with a local *anesthetic* (a numbing medicine).
- When the area is numb, we will place a needle into your joint space. A fluoroscope will be used to guide the needle.
- When the needle is in the correct place, we will inject the contrast. Your joint may feel “full,” or you may feel some pressure in the joint.
- We will then take X-ray images.
- The arthrogram will take about 30 minutes. We will then send you to the MRI room for part 2 of the scan.

Part 2: The MRI

- You will lie on a sliding table. The technologist will help you get into position and then leave the room to take the images.
- You will be able to talk with the technologist through an intercom.
- The scan usually takes 30 to 45 minutes.
- You may feel warmth in the area where the images are taken. This is normal. If it bothers you, please tell the MRI technologist.
- You will hear loud tapping or knocking noises during the scan. We will give you earplugs and headphones with music to help block some of these sounds.

After Your Scan

- You may leave the Radiology department right after your MRI. Do **only** light activity for the rest of the day.
- Your joints may be stiff or sore the next day from the contrast. This should get better in 1 or 2 days as your body absorbs the contrast.
- If you have a lot of pain after your scan, call the Radiology department or your referring doctor **right away**. Joint infection is rare after this scan, but if it occurs it should be treated right away.

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

- An MRI radiologist will review and interpret your MRI images. This radiologist will not talk with you about the results, but they will send a report to your primary care or referring provider. This provider will give you the results.
- You and your provider will then decide on the next step, such as treatment for a problem, as needed.
- You may also read your results on your MyChart page.

Questions?

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

- Harborview Imaging Services: 206.744.3105
- FHCC Imaging Services: 206.606.1434
- UWMC - Montlake Imaging Services: 206.598.5800
- UWMC - Northwest Imaging Services: 206.598.5800