

## Information for Consumers - Arthrogram

This article tells you about an arthrogram, the benefits and the risks, what happens before, during and after having an arthrogram.

### What is an arthrogram?

An arthrogram uses x-rays and a special dye to make pictures of your joints.

The dye is injected into your joint. After the dye is injected, pictures are taken using an x-ray machine.

The pictures may also be taken using a computed tomography (CT) scanner or a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scanner. This is called a CT arthrogram or a MRI arthrogram.

### Benefits of arthrograms

- Used for diagnosis to show detail of joints in your knees, hips, shoulders, wrists and ankles
- Can see the structure in and around the joints, including cartilage, ligaments, tendons and muscles

### Risks of an arthrogram

Your doctor knows the risks of having an arthrogram. Your doctor will consider the risks before recommending you to have an arthrogram. Possible risks are:

- Not recommended for pregnant women
- Small amount of radiation. The amount of radiation you are exposed to depends on the number of pictures taken and the part of the body being examined
- **Extremely small** chance you could develop cancer in the long term from the radiation
- An allergic reaction to the dye. You may have nausea, sneezing, vomiting, itching, hives and dizziness
- Skin infection at the site of injection
- Infection, bruising or swelling in the joint
- Increase in pain, stiffness or swelling in the joint. This may be temporary or permanent, however, it is very rare

If you are concerned about the risks, talk to your doctor before the examination.

### Preparation for the arthrogram

- Bring your referral letter or request form and all x-rays taken in the last 2 years with you
- Leave the x-rays with the radiology staff as the doctor may need to look at them. The radiology staff will tell you when these are ready to be picked up
- Wear comfortable, loose clothing
- Leave all jewellery and valuables at home



## Important to tell your doctor before the arthrogram

- If you are or may be pregnant
- Any allergies and medical conditions you have, including asthma, diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease or thyroid problems
- Any medications you are taking

## Just before the arthrogram

- You will be given a gown to wear
- You may be asked to remove any metal objects

## Consent

You have the right to refuse an examination and may do so if you wish. You may be asked to complete a consent form.

## What happens during an arthrogram?

Staff will ask you to sit or lie down on an x-ray bed. The staff will clean the skin on the joint you are having x-rayed with an antiseptic liquid and then inject a local anaesthetic into the skin. This may sting for a little while.

A radiology doctor will use a special type of x-ray machine, called a fluoroscope, to help them put the needle into your joint. Once the needle is in the right place they will inject the dye into the joint. You may feel some pressure in the joint. The radiology doctor will watch the dye on the television screen and once the dye is in the correct location, he/she will remove the needle. You will be asked to move the joint so that the dye moves around it.

Once the dye has flowed into your joint the radiology doctor and x-ray staff will start taking x-rays. You will need to lie still while the staff are taking pictures.

If you are having a CT or MRI arthrogram you will be taken to the appropriate scan area, where you will have your pictures taken. If you are having a CT or MRI, the staff will leave the room and control the movement of the bed from behind a screen. They will see, hear and speak to you at all times. You will be able to speak to them at all times. They will tell you what is happening, when to hold still and if you need to take a deep breath and hold it. If you get stiff, need to move or are feeling closed in (claustrophobic), tell the staff.

When the scanning is finished you will be asked to wait while the staff check the pictures.



The arthrogram, including getting you ready on the table takes between 30 to 60 minutes. If you are having a CT or MRI, this may take an extra 30 to 60 minutes.

## When will I get the results?

The amount of time it takes for you to get your results will differ depending on where you get your scans done. The radiology doctor will look at the pictures and write a report. The pictures may be on films or on a CD.

Ask whether you should wait to take the pictures and report with you, or whether they will be sent to your doctor.

Your doctor will need to discuss the report with you. You will need to make an appointment to do this.

## After the arthrogram

You will be able to leave soon after the arthrogram is finished.

After the arthrogram your joint and where you had the injection may be a little sore, but this usually goes away within a day. If your joint is sore, do not lift or do any heavy exercise for one to two days after the arthrogram.

## If you had a sedative

- **You must not drive a car or take public transport and must have someone with you for 24 hours afterwards.**
- **You must not operate machinery for the rest of the day.**

## Costs

For an Australian patient in a Public Hospital in Western Australia

- Public patient - no cost to you unless advised otherwise
- Private patient - costs can be claimed through Medicare and your health insurance provider

For a patient in a Private Hospital or Private Imaging Site in Western Australia or a patient outside Western Australia

- Ask your doctor or the staff where you are having your test done what the cost will be

## Further information

For more detailed information please access arthrogram from InsideRadiology at:



[www.insideradiology.com.au](http://www.insideradiology.com.au)

This is a resource produced especially for consumers by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists: [www.ranzcr.edu.au](http://www.ranzcr.edu.au)

A guide to gathering information that you may need for making informed decisions is published by the Consumers' Health Council of Australia at: <https://chf.org.au>

If you would like to look at other relevant articles, please access the following:

- [CT scan](#)
- [MRI scan](#)
- [Radiation risks of x-rays and scans](#)

Or access the Diagnostic Imaging Pathways website at:  
[www.imagingpathways.health.wa.gov.au/index.php/consumer-info](http://www.imagingpathways.health.wa.gov.au/index.php/consumer-info)

Or if you have questions or require any further information please contact your doctor or speak to the staff where you are going to have your procedure.

## Consumer participation

This information has been reviewed by representatives from the following groups:

- Aboriginal people
- People with disabilities
- Seniors
- CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse)
- The Health Consumers' Council

## Feedback

All feedback, comments and suggestions regarding consumer information at Diagnostic Imaging Pathways are welcome. Please direct them to the following email address: [dipfeedback@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:dipfeedback@health.wa.gov.au)

## Disclaimer

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