

Arthrogram

WHAT IS AN ARTHROGRAM?

An arthrogram is a type of x-ray used to examine a joint, such as the shoulder or hip, when standard x-rays are not adequate. A small amount of contrast (x-ray dye) and local anaesthetic is injected into the joint, using fluoroscopy (similar to an x-ray 'movie') as a guide. Contrast is a type of dye that is visible on x-rays and MRI scans, allowing the particular joint being examined to be seen more clearly. CT or MR imaging is often used in conjunction with an arthrogram to better visualize the joint.

REASONS FOR THE PROCEDURE:

- An arthrogram may be performed on a joint when there has been persistent and unexplained pain, discomfort, and/or dysfunction in the joint.
- To identify abnormalities (for example, acute and chronic tears) in the soft tissues of the joint, such as ligaments, cartilage, and joint capsules.
- To evaluate damage from recurrent dislocations of the joint.
- To visualize synovial cysts.
- To assess previous surgery.

RISKS OF THE PROCEDURE:

- Some potential risks of an arthrogram include:
 - **Infection at the puncture site** where the contrast is injected
 - **Allergic reaction to the contrast.** However, such a reaction is rare because the contrast is not injected into a vein
- An arthrogram is not recommended for people with active arthritis or with joint infections.
- Because an arthrogram is done under x-ray guidance, should notify your doctor prior to booking an appointment if you are pregnant or suspect you may be pregnant.

BEFORE THE PROCEDURE:

- If you are having an MRI or CT in conjunction with the arthrogram, you will be asked to fill out some forms before the procedure. Read the forms carefully and ask questions if something is not clear.
- Generally, there is no special restriction on diet or activity prior to an arthrogram.
- If you are pregnant or suspect that you are pregnant, you should notify your doctor.

DURING THE PROCEDURE:

- You will be asked to remove any clothing, jewellery, or other objects that may interfere with the procedure, and you will be given a gown to wear.
- You will be positioned on the examination table in the screening (fluoroscopy) room.
- X-rays of the joint may be taken prior to the procedure for comparison with the images obtained during and after the procedure.
- The skin around the joint to be examined will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution and covered with a sterile drape.
- The area around the joint will be numbed with an injection of a local anesthetic and contrast will then be injected into the joint.
- X-rays are generally taken throughout the procedure to check positioning.

Arthrogram CONTINUED

- You will typically have an MRI scan, or less commonly a CT scan, after the arthrogram has been performed, to obtain full evaluation of the joint.

While the arthrogram procedure itself causes little pain, having to hold the joint still in certain position for the procedure might cause some discomfort, particularly in the case of a recent injury or surgery. We will complete the procedure as quickly as possible to minimise any discomfort or pain.

AFTER THE PROCEDURE

- You may be asked to rest the joint for several hours after the procedure i.e. no sporting activities or strenuous lifting using the affected joint.
- Some mild swelling may be noted in or around the joint after the arthrogram. If swelling continues or increases after a day or two, you should notify your doctor.
- **Notify your GP or referring doctor immediately if you develop:**
 - A fever.
 - Redness, swelling, bleeding, or other drainage from the injection site.
 - Increased pain around the injection site.