

CT MYELOGRAM

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What is a CT Myelogram?

A CT Myelogram is a test that shows whether there is any structure pushing on the spinal cord or spinal nerves. During the procedure, a Radiologist places a small needle into the fluid-filled sac that surrounds the spinal cord and nerves in your low back or, less commonly, the neck. Once the needle is in the correct position, a dye is injected into the fluid-filled sac. This dye outlines the spinal cord and nerves. A filling defect of the dye (less dye) is seen around the spinal cord or nerves when there is a structure, such as a herniated disc or a bone spur, pushing on the nerve.

Why do I need a Myelogram?

Myelography is a time tested method that evaluates the relationship between the spinal cord/nerve and the structures that surround it. This includes the bones, joints, and discs in your spine. In certain cases, Myelography and the CT scan that follows it provide information that otherwise is not evident on an MRI scan, a Plain CT scan, or an X-ray.

How is a Myelogram performed?

First, you will be placed on a table lying on your stomach. Next, a Radiologist will prepare the area to be injected with a cleaning solution. A small amount of local anesthetic is injected to numb this area. The Radiologist will then place the needle into the spine and inject the dye into a fluid-filled sac. Plain X-rays will be taken, after the injection, to look for filling defects around the nerves. The entire procedure takes less than an hour.

How do I prepare for the Myelogram?

There are no special preparations and it is an outpatient test. It is performed in the Radiology Department.

What happens after the Myelogram is done?

You will be sent to the CT scanner for a CT scan of the area in the spine where you have the pinched nerve(s). This takes about 30 minutes. You will be observed by the hospital staff for about 4 hours after the Myelogram is completed. Once you have returned home you will be asked to rest for the remainder of the day and resume your usual activities the following day. You may have some soreness over the injection site. This should gradually improve over a few days.

What are the potential complications of a Myelogram?

Complications are very rare. The most common one is a spinal headache. This occurs as a result of persistent leakage of spinal fluid, from the sac, at the needle puncture site. The headache can often be prevented by not sitting or standing upright after the test and by drinking plenty of fluids. You will be instructed to have your head elevated, on two pillows, after the Myelogram and to avoid sitting upright for approximately four hours. Less than 1% of patients develop bleeding or infection. Finally, the rarest complication is a seizure, which occurs only when the injected dye in the spinal fluid travels up into the brain. Keeping your head elevated on two pillows after the procedure is the best way to prevent this from occurring.