

Going Home After a Myelogram

For patients and families

Read this brochure to learn more about:

- what to do when you get home
- problems to watch for
- who to call if you have questions

What is a myelogram?

A myelogram uses x-rays and a special dye to make pictures of the space between the bones in your spine.



Why do I need this test?

A myelogram is done to look for problems in the spine and brain such as arthritis in the spine or a cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) leak in the brain. It may also be done when an MRI and CT scan do not give enough information about the cause of spine or back problems.

People who cannot have MRIs such as those who have a pacemaker may also have a myelogram.

How do I prepare for my myelogram?



Important!

- **Do not eat for at least 6 hours before your test is scheduled. You can take sips of clear fluid such as water up to 4 hours before the test.**
- **Do not drive for 24 hours after the test.** Please have a family member or friend take you home after the test.
- **Tell us if you take any blood thinners or antiplatelet medicine when you make your appointment.** You may need to stop taking your blood thinners or antiplatelets before the test since some medicines increase the chance of bleeding. Ask your family doctor or primary health care provider if you should stop taking medicines before the procedure or ask your doctor to call the radiologist to talk about other options. It is recommended that before this procedure:
 - Antiplatelet medication is stopped for 7 days
 - Warfarin is stopped for 5 days
 - Low molecular heparin is stopped for 48 hours
- **If you have any allergies or are allergic to iodine or to the x-ray dye,** please tell the radiologist before the test.

What to bring:

- A list of the medicines you are taking
- Ontario Health Card (OHIP)

What happens before the procedure?

- You will be asked to change into a hospital gown.
- You will need to remove your eyeglasses and any jewelry.
- You will be asked to lie down on your stomach on the exam table.
- Your back will be cleaned with an antiseptic and draped with sterile towels.

The radiologist will explain exactly what is going to happen. Please ask any questions you may have.

What happens during the procedure?

- The radiologist numbs your skin by injecting a local anesthetic. Your skin may sting for few seconds.
- A special needle is inserted into the spine and then a small amount of dye is injected to take x-ray pictures of the area. You may feel some pressure when the dye is injected but it is important to stay very still.
- When the needle is removed, a small bandage is put on your back where the needle was put in. We may also need to take a CT scan to compare with the myelogram.
- Then you will be taken to the recovery area to be monitored.

How long will the procedure take?

The procedure will take about 1 to 2 hours.

What can I expect after the procedure?

It's normal to have a mild headache for up to 24 hours after the test.

- Take a pain reliever such as acetaminophen (Tylenol). Follow the instructions on the bottle.
- Do not lie flat or let your head be lower than the rest of your body for the first 24 hours after the test.
- Lie down with 1 or 2 pillows under your head and rest in a quiet room. Use 1 or 2 pillows to support your head and shoulders to sleep.
- Drink lots of water.

How do I take care of myself at home?

- Do not drink alcohol for the first 24 hours after your test.
- Rest for the first day. You can do your usual activities again the next day.
- Do not exercise or lift anything more than 5 pounds (2.5 kilograms) for the next 2 days.
- Start taking your usual medicines when you get home unless your doctor tells you otherwise.
- If you take any blood thinners or antiplatelets, talk to the radiologist about when it is safe to take them again.



Go to the nearest emergency department if you notice:

- Fever (temperature above 38 °C or 101 °F)
- Stiff neck
- Severe headache that lasts for 24 hours or gets worse even after lying down and resting
- Weakness, tingling or numbness in your legs
- Nausea and vomiting more than 24 hours

When will I get the results?

Call your family doctor to book a follow-up appointment for 7 to 10 days after your test to talk about the results of your myelogram.

Who can I call if I have questions?

Please call your family doctor, or:

[Toronto Western Hospital Medical Imaging Department](#)

East Wing – Take east elevators to 3rd Floor

Phone: 416 603 5871

Hours: Monday to Friday 7:30 am – 8:00 pm

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