



MR arthrogram

Information for patients

This leaflet tells you about the procedure known as an MR arthrogram; it explains what is involved and the possible risks.

If you think you may be pregnant please contact the radiology team before your appointment.

If you take any medication to thin your blood (aspirin, warfarin, Clopidogrel) please inform us on 01737 231 721 as we will need to confirm with your consultant that these can be stopped.

Please do not drive following your appointment, as your insurance company may not cover you. It is advisable to bring someone with you to escort you home. We have no childcare facilities. If you need to bring your children with you, you must bring somebody with you who can look after them while you have the procedure.

What is an MR arthrogram?

A magnetic resonance arthrogram is an investigation of a joint, usually the shoulder, elbow, wrist, hip, knee, or ankle. It is a two-part procedure:

- The first part involves a Consultant Radiologist (x-ray doctor) placing a needle into the joint to inject a contrast agent, a type of dye (this takes place in an x-ray room)
- The second part of the procedure is the MRI Scan when the pictures will be taken immediately after your injection.

Are there any risks in having an MRI scan?

MRI is not suitable for everyone. Radiographers have to be 100% certain that safety standards are met before you enter the MRI scanning room. You will have been sent a safety questionnaire to complete. Please fill this in **before** your appointment and if you answer yes to any of the questions please call the department.

There are no known risks to MRI as long as safety standards are followed.

If you suffer from claustrophobia, it may be advisable to get a mild sedative from your GP before your

appointment, as it will help achieve a successful scan.

Why am I having an MR arthrogram?

This test has usually been arranged following discussion with your orthopaedic or rheumatology consultant. It is more accurate than a standard MR scan, in assessing the internal structures of your joint, and can help plan when surgery is required. Common reasons for an MR arthrogram are to help find any damage to cartilage, ligaments, labrum, or laxity/instability of the joint.

What are the advantages?

The advantages over a plain MR scan without injection are increased accuracy in finding injuries within the joint. This information will help plan whether surgery is necessary, and which type of surgery is best.

What will happen during the arthrogram?

- The doctor performing the test (consultant radiologist) will discuss the procedure with you and answer any questions you may have about the test
- You will be asked to lie down on the x-ray table by a Radiology Nurse or Radiographer
- The area of skin over the joint will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution
- The Radiographer will move the x-ray camera into position over your joint.
- You will be warned that you are getting a local anaesthetic injection. You will feel a slight scratch, following by mild stinging whilst the anaesthetic takes effect. After this it is usual to experience a slight pushing sensation, but it should not be painful.
- The needle is placed into the joint using x-ray guidance. To check that the needle is in the right place, some x-ray dye is injected first and once we are sure the needle is in the correct place, a different MRI dye is then injected through the same needle.
- This procedure usually takes only a few minutes.
- You will then be taken to the MRI scanner to have the pictures taken.

What are the risks when having an MR Arthrogram?

Thankfully, the risks are very small.

- You may get bruising where you had your injection
- It is possible to be allergic to the dyes used, but this is extremely rare. If you are known to have an allergy, please let us know on the day
- It is possible to develop an infection after the procedure, but again this is very rare as a fully sterile technique is used

How will I feel afterwards?

- You may get bruising where you had your injection
- You may experience swelling and discomfort or hear a crackling noise in the joint. You may apply ice to the joint to reduce swelling if it is bothersome
- A mild over-the-counter analgesic can be taken for any pain. These symptoms should resolve within 6-8 hours
- It is advisable to rest the joint for a couple of days after the test
- Contact your doctor if pain persists after 12 hours
- In the days following the test, if the area around your joint becomes more swollen, more painful, difficult to move, if the skin becomes reddened, or if you feel unwell, feverish or develop a temperature, **you will need to return to the hospital emergency department (A and E) to make sure there are no signs of joint infection**

Are there any alternatives to having an MR Arthrogram?

You can have a standard MRI scan without the joint injection, but this does not always show all the internal damage in the joint.

If you are unable to undergo an MRI scan, e.g. if you are claustrophobic or you have a pacemaker, the procedure can be done as a CT Arthrogram instead.

How do I get my results?

The consultant radiologist will look at your MR pictures and produce a report. Your results will then go back to your orthopaedic consultant, and you will get the results at your next outpatient clinic appointment.

Frequently asked questions

Can I take my normal medication?

All medication except aspirin, warfarin or Clopidogrel can be taken as normal.

Will I need to bring a dressing gown?

This is not essential, but if you feel more comfortable wearing a dressing gown then please bring one with you on the day of your test.

Can I bring a relative or friend with me?

Yes.

Will the test be painful?

There is stinging when the local anaesthetic is injected but the tissue will go numb once this takes effect.

How long will the test take?

The test usually takes about 60min altogether. However, we are an acute hospital and do have to accommodate emergencies should they arise but we do our best to keep appointments on schedule.

Can I eat and drink normally before and after the test?

Yes.

Can I go to work normally the following day?

Yes.

How to find us

Your scan is on the main MRI scanner. This is in diagnostic Imaging (X-ray) on the ground floor of East Surrey Hospital, closest to the main entrance. Please report to main reception. Please do not follow signs to the extremity MRI scanner, which is at the other end of the hospital.

More information

If you need to cancel, change your appointment or have any concerns/queries about your examination, please contact the MRI department on: 01737 768511 x1721 (Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm).

Directions, parking and travel information for East Surrey Hospital and Crawley Hospital is available on our website at www.surreyandsussex.nhs.uk/finding-us/

Contact us

Diagnostic imaging

Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust

East Surrey Hospital

Redhill Surrey RH1 5RH

Tel: 01737 231 721

www.surreyandsussex.nhs.uk

For medical advice please call NHS 111 or visit the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk

Tell us about your experience

We welcome your feedback and comments about our staff and services. This will help share what we do well, learn and make improvements. To share your compliments, comments, concerns or complaints please speak to the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) in the first instance.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can provide confidential advice and support, and can negotiate prompt solutions by liaising with staff and, where appropriate, relevant organisations on your behalf. You can also ask a member of staff to contact PALS on your behalf.

Telephone: 01737 231 958

Email: sash.pals@nhs.net

Write to: PALS, East Surrey Hospital, Redhill, Surrey RH1 5RH

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