

# Having an MRI arthrogram to examine a joint

## Department of Radiology

### Information for Patients

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## Introduction

If you are an outpatient please read your appointment letter carefully to check which hospital your appointment is at. This leaflet tells you about your examination. Please read it carefully as it contains important information and instructions.

## What is an MRI arthrogram?

An MRI arthrogram is an arthrogram procedure followed by an MRI scan.

**An arthrogram** is a special X-ray procedure to look at the joints within the body such as the shoulders, ankles, hips or knees. This may be to assess an injury or symptom you are having. A colourless liquid that shows up on MRI scans and X-ray images (contrast liquid), is injected to show up the joint being examined.

**An MRI scan** is a scan which uses a powerful magnet and a computer to produce detailed images of any part of the body. The MRI scanner does not use X-rays. An MRI scan with the contrast liquid will show detailed images of your joint.

## How long will it take?

The arthrogram will take 15 to 30 minutes.

An MRI scan usually takes between 30 and 45 minutes. The time will vary for each patient.

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit [www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

## Important safety information

You must tell us, by phoning the number on your appointment letter if you:

- have a pacemaker or internal defibrillator.
- have ever had any metal fragments in your eyes.
- have any implants or surgical clips in your body or head.
- have ever had an operation on your head, eyes, ears, heart or chest.
- think there is a chance that you might be pregnant.
- have had an operation in the last 6 weeks.
- have a cochlear implant for your hearing.
- are breast feeding.

If you are already staying in hospital as an inpatient, please ask staff on your ward to phone the MRI scan room to inform us if any of the above applies to you.

If you have been sent a safety questionnaire with your appointment letter, please fill it in and bring it with you.

## Important information if you are taking medication that thins the blood

If you are taking medication that thins the blood (anticoagulants or antiplatelets) it may need to be stopped or replaced with a different one for a few days. Please call the Radiology Department for advice by phoning the number on your appointment letter as soon as possible. You will be asked what blood thinning medication you are taking, how much you take (the dose), and what you are taking it for.

### Common examples of these drugs include:

- aspirin
- warfarin
- clopidogrel (Plavix®)
- apixiban (Eliquis)
- rivaroxaban (Xarelto)
- ticagrelor (Brilinta)
- dalteparin
- heparin

You may have already been given instructions on blood thinners by the doctor who referred you for this procedure. Please still call the Radiology Department so we can check this.

## How do I get ready for an MRI arthrogram?

If your appointment letter contains instructions on how to get ready for the procedure (preparation instructions) it is very important that you follow these instructions carefully.

**Please bring any sprays or inhalers that you are taking with you to your appointment.**

**If you are on medication from your doctor please continue to take it as normal, unless it is blood thinning medication and you have been told not to take it.**

You should make arrangements for someone to drive you home after the examination.

A member of staff will explain the procedure fully and ask you to complete a safety questionnaire if you haven't already done so.

It is helpful to wear clothes which do not have metal zips or clips.

**Before the scan you will need to remove all loose metal objects, including:**

- watch, activity tracker, mobile phone, money, credit cards, keys, glasses.
- all jewellery (including piercings) - metal piercings can be replaced with plastic piercings before coming for your appointment.
- hair clips and grips, wigs, hair pieces, weaves or extensions.
- eye make-up, fake eyelashes.
- sports clothing that contains silver fibres.
- stick-on drug patches - see instructions below.
- diabetic monitoring device - see instructions below.

**If you have a fear of confined spaces** (claustrophobia) please tell us when you arrive. Most people who are anxious about the MRI scan are able to manage it with support from our staff.

**If you have an uncontrollable fear of needles** (needle phobia) please call the Radiology Department on the number at the end of this leaflet as soon as possible. We can talk to the radiology doctors about your appointment and check if there is another type of scan that can be done instead.

### **If you have a drug patch on your skin:**

If you have a stick-on drug patch this will need to be removed before having your MRI scan. This is because the patch may warm up or get hot during the scan. This can change the amount of drug given to you.

Once a drug patch is removed it will not reattach to the skin. If you need your drug patch all the time, please bring a new patch with you so you can put it on after the scan is completed.

If your drug patch is applied by a nurse at home, please tell the nurse that you will need a new patch after your procedure. They can then arrange to visit you at home to apply a new one.

## **If you have a glucose monitor and/ or insulin pump on your skin:**

If you use a glucose sensor (flash monitor or continuous glucose monitor (CGM)), which attaches to the surface of your skin, this will need to be removed for your MRI scan. Please bring a replacement to your appointment so you can apply it after your scan. Alternatively, you can contact us to change your appointment for this procedure so it ties in with when you are due to replace your sensor.

If you have an insulin pump with tubing, you will need to remove the pump before the scan can be performed. The pump can be reattached as soon as the procedure is over.

If you have a patch pump, such as an Omnipod, you will need to remove the Pod and keep your Personal Diabetes Manager (PDM) outside of the room with your belongings. Please bring a new Pod to apply after your scan.

## **What happens during the examination?**

### **The arthrogram:**

- On arrival at the Radiology Department you may be asked to change into a hospital gown. If you are having a knee or ankle arthrogram you may find it helpful to wear a skirt or shorts.
- You will be taken into the X-ray room where the examination will be explained to you and you can ask any questions that you may have.
- X-rays may be taken of your joint before the arthrogram procedure begins. You will then be asked to lie down on the X-ray table. Your skin will be cleaned with antiseptic liquid and sterile towels will be placed over you. Local anaesthetic will be injected into your skin to make the procedure less painful, and then a small amount of contrast liquid will be injected into the joint.
- X-ray pictures will then be taken of the joint in different positions.
- In some patients, local anaesthetic is also injected into the joint capsule. Occasionally some of this local anaesthetic can diffuse out of the joint and cause numbness and weakness in the limb. This is one of the reasons we advise you not to drive after the examination.

### **The MRI scan:**

- You will then be taken to the MRI scanner where the scan will be explained and you can ask any questions that you may have.
- You will be asked to lie down on the MRI scanner table which will move into the magnet.
- During the MRI scan you will hear a rhythmic tapping sound which may become quite loud. This is normal. You will be given headphones or earplugs to protect your ears from the noise.
- The radiographer operating the scanner can see you throughout the scan. You will be given a call button to alert the staff if you need to speak to them during the scan.

## Who will be doing the examination?

A doctor who specialises in imaging and X-ray treatments (an interventional radiologist) will do the procedure. There will also be a nurse and a radiographer in the room. There may also be a healthcare assistant.

As we are a teaching hospital a student may also be present. If you wish, you can ask that a student is not present during your examination

## Are there any risks?

As with any procedure or operation, complications are possible. We have included the most common risks and complications in this leaflet, although they are different for each person. Your risks will be discussed with you before you sign the consent form.

- **Infection** - there is a very small risk of an infection being introduced into the joint. Signs of an infection are a high temperature and the joint becoming more painful, swollen, hot or red. If you have any of these symptoms, please seek treatment from your GP or call the NHS helpline on 111, or go to your nearest Emergency Department.
- **Side effect or reaction to the contrast liquid** - some patients get side effects or an allergic reaction to the contrast liquid. You may have symptoms such as itchy skin, rash, pain at the injection site, feeling or being sick (nausea or vomiting). If you get any of these symptoms at the hospital please tell the doctor, nurse or staff looking after you. If you develop symptoms at home you should contact your GP or call 111.
- The use of magnetic fields in an MRI scan is not thought to be harmful. No short-term harmful side effects have been found from MRI scans. However, long-term side effects are unknown.

**If you have any problems after the examination please see your GP or call the NHS helpline on 111.**

## What are the risks from radiation in this procedure?

The main risk from exposure to X-rays is an increase in the risk of getting a cancer in the future. This risk is thought to be very small. We are all exposed to natural background radiation every day of our lives. This comes from the sun, food we eat, and the ground. Each examination that uses X-rays gives a dose on top of this natural background radiation. The risks of radiation are slightly higher for an unborn child so we must ask some patients aged 10 to 55 years about their menstrual periods and possibility of being pregnant.

The benefits of this examination are likely to outweigh any potential risk, and the risk from not having the examination could be greater. We will take all safeguards to minimise the amount of X-rays you receive.

## Asking for your permission (consent)

The doctor who referred you should have talked to you about the reasons for this procedure and any other options.

You have been referred to a hospital doctor or a radiologist for this procedure. Radiologists are doctors who specialise in imaging and X-ray treatments. They will check that you understand why the procedure is being done, its potential risks and what the chances of success are. You will then be asked to sign a consent form to confirm this. **You should feel that you have had enough explanation before you sign the consent form.**

If after talking to the hospital doctor or radiologist you do not want to have the procedure, then you can decide against it at any time.

If the radiologist feels that your condition has changed they will talk to you about whether the procedure is still needed. They may then ask you to return to your referring doctor for review.

## How do I get the results?

The results will not be given to you immediately. The images will be looked at by a radiologist and the results will be sent to the consultant who referred you for this examination.

If you are an inpatient when you come for the examination, the results will be given to the doctor looking after you on your ward.

We will tell you how you can get your results after your examination.

## What if I need to talk to someone?

If you have any questions or concerns, or cannot make your appointment, please call the Radiology Department on **0116 258 8765 (option 7)** - Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, excluding bank holidays.

If you have an uncontrollable fear of needles (needle phobia) please call the number above as soon as possible. We can talk to the radiology doctors about your appointment and check if there is another type of scan that can be done instead.



اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔  
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل  
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।  
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