

TESTfacts

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MRI Intravenous Contrast Information



Your health care provider has requested an MRI scan be performed with the injection of a contrast agent into the body. The contrast will be given through a small needle placed into a vein. The contrast agent, which is gadolinium, changes the properties of water molecules within the body and results in improved scan quality. This improves the diagnostic accuracy of the MRI scan. Unlike contrast agents used in X-ray studies or CT scans, MRI contrast agents do not contain iodine and rarely cause allergic reactions or other problems.

The following complications are possible anytime an injection is given: minor pain, bruising, swelling or infection. In rare cases, contrast agents can cause adverse reactions. The most common reactions are mild such as headache, dizziness, nausea and itching. More serious reactions include difficulty breathing and swelling of the lips, occurring in less than 1 percent of cases. Allergic reactions will tend to occur almost immediately. Serious reactions may require emergency treatment including medication. Fatal reactions to gadolinium can occur but are extremely rare.

You may be at higher risk of having a reaction if you have any of the following risk factors:

- Previous adverse reaction to MRI contrast agent
- History of asthma
- History of allergic respiratory disorders

If you have not had a recent blood test to check your kidney function, a finger stick blood test will be done just prior to your MRI exam.

With normal kidney function, most of the gadolinium is removed from your body in the urine within 24 hours.

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If you have acute renal failure or severe chronic kidney disease and receive a gadolinium-based contrast agent, there may be a very small risk of developing a rare condition called Nephrogenic Systemic Fibrosis (NSF). There have been no reports of NSF among patients with normal kidney function or those with mild to moderate kidney insufficiency.

If you are pregnant or think you may be pregnant, please inform the technologist.

If you are breast feeding, it is safe to continue breast feeding after the contrast has been given. The amount of contrast used is small and is rapidly removed from your body, thus representing no danger to your child.

If you have any questions you can contact Advanced Biomedical Imaging (Radiology) at 303-398-1611.

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