



# Arthrogram

*About your procedure*

**An arthrogram is an imaging exam of a joint that uses contrast material and fluoroscopy.**

**Read this handout to learn about how the exam works, how to prepare for it, how it is done, what to expect during the exam, and how to get your results.**

## What is an arthrogram?

An *arthrogram* is an X-ray exam of a joint. It uses a special X-ray machine called a *fluoroscope* and a *contrast material* (dye) that contains iodine.

## How does the exam work?

A fluoroscope is an X-ray machine that shows live pictures of your joint. The fluoroscope helps the radiologist place a small needle into your joint. The contrast material will be injected through this needle. After it is injected, several X-rays will be taken.

## How should I prepare for the exam?

- You may eat and drink as usual.
- You may need to remove your jewelry if it will affect the exam.

## How is the exam done?

1. A technologist may ask you to change into a gown.
2. The radiologist who will perform the procedure will explain the exam, possible risks, and answer any questions you may have.
3. In the X-ray exam room, you will lie on a table.
4. The skin around your joint will be washed with antiseptic. A local *anesthetic* (numbing medicine) may be injected into the area around your joint. You may feel a pinprick and burning as the anesthetic is injected.
5. After your skin is numb, a needle will be placed into the joint space.
6. When the fluoroscope shows that the needle is in the right place, the contrast will be injected through the needle. You may feel “fullness” as the joint is filled with contrast.
7. After the injection, the needle will be removed.

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## Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. Clinic staff are also available to help.

**UWMC Roosevelt Radiology:**

To schedule an appointment, call  
206-598-7200

For questions, call  
206-598-6622

**Harborview Imaging Services:**

To schedule an appointment, call  
206-744-3105

For questions, call  
206-744-2500

8. You will be asked to move your joint so that the contrast material spreads out evenly. Then, X-rays will be taken with your joint in different positions.
9. The exam usually takes 30 to 45 minutes.

## After Your Arthrogram

- You may leave the Radiology Department right after your arthrogram.
- Do only light activity for the rest of the day.
- Your joints may be stiff or sore the next day from the contrast agent. This should get better in 1 or 2 days as your body absorbs the agent.
- If you have a lot of pain after your exam, please contact the Radiology Department or your referring doctor **right away**. A rare, but possible, problem is joint infection, which should be treated right away.

## Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

A radiologist who is trained to interpret arthrograms will review your X-rays and send a report to the doctor who referred you for this test. Your doctor will give you your test results. The radiologist will not discuss the results with you. Based on the findings, you and your doctor will decide the next step, such as treatment for a problem, as needed.

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