

Iodinated Contrast (Dye)

Introduction

Iodinated contrast is a clear solution that contains iodine. It can be ingested orally or injected into your bloodstream.

For the contrast to be injected into your bloodstream, a small needle (cannula) will be placed into a vein in your arm. When the contrast is injected you might feel:

- A warm, flushed feeling over your body
- A feeling that you have passed urine (this is only a feeling – you will not pass urine)
- A metallic taste in your mouth.

Your body removes the contrast through the kidneys. So your kidney function will normally be checked with a blood test. This is to make sure the contrast will be properly removed from your body.

Purpose

It is used to highlight certain areas inside your body. This is often essential so that clearer images of your organs and tissues can be seen on X-ray or computed tomography (CT) scans (see separate fact sheets).

Preparation

You will need to drink 2 cups of water prior to scan and fasted 2 hours prior to scan.

You will need to complete a consent form before the scan, in regards to your medical history, allergies, are you pregnant or think you might be pregnant.

Results

A radiologist (a specialist doctor) assesses the images and sends the results to your referring doctor. You should not have any issues after your test. You need to discuss the results with your treating doctor.

Risks

There are three main risks:

- Extravasation – this is when some of the injected contrast leaks outside the vein, under the skin and into the tissue. This may cause pain and swelling in the area.
- Allergic reactions – these can be mild, with rash, nausea, swelling, hives and itchiness. They can be moderate with vomiting and shortness of breath. Or they can be severe with low blood pressure, fast heart rate and difficulty breathing. Severe life threatening reactions are rare, affecting one in every 100,000 people. Allergic symptoms usually happen within five minutes of the injection, but mild reactions can occur from one hour to one week later.
- Kidney problems – this is where one or both of your kidneys suddenly stop working. To reduce this risk, the smallest possible dose of contrast is given.

More Information

InsideRadiology by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists:
www.insideradiology.com.au

RadiologyInfo by the American College of Radiology and Radiological Society of North America: www.radiologyinfo.org

The Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency: www.arpsa.gov.au

The Alliance for Radiation Safety in Pediatric Imaging: www.imagegently.org

ACI Radiology Network:
www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au