

Iodinated contrast (dye)

This fact sheet tells you what an iodinated contrast is, and what is involved. Please read this sheet carefully. If you have any questions, ask your doctor.

What is iodinated contrast?

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

What is involved?

You will be given instructions on how to prepare for your scan. **Before the scan, you should tell your doctor and the imaging staff if you have allergies, are pregnant or think you might be pregnant, or have any kidney problems.**

The contrast might not be suitable for you if you have some other health issues. You will be asked to complete a safety checklist before having the contrast and your scan.

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.

What happens after the scan?

It is recommended that you drink plenty of water (two to four glasses) after your procedure to help your kidneys flush the contrast out from your body.

Are there any 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.

For 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

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