

Lymphangiogram of the Extremities

How to prepare

This handout explains how to prepare for a lymphangiogram of the extremities. This scan helps diagnose problems in the lymph system. It tells how the scan is done, what you may feel during the scan, and how to get your results.



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What is a lymphangiogram of the extremities?

A *lymphangiogram* is a nuclear medicine scan. It is a special X-ray of your lymph system. It is usually done to diagnose problems with the flow or drainage of lymph fluids in your body.

A lymphangiogram of the *extremities* takes images of the lymph system in your legs (lower extremities) or arms (upper extremities).

How do I prepare?

Before Your Scan

- For your comfort, you may want to use **EMLA (lidocaine) cream** to numb your skin. You can buy it at your drugstore without a prescription.
- *If you were assigned female at birth:* Tell your provider if you are pregnant or breastfeeding, or if there is any chance you could be pregnant.



Talk with your provider if you have any questions about this scan.

On the Day of Your Scan

- Apply a thick layer of the cream 2 hours before your scan:
 - If you are having a lymphangiogram of your **lower extremities**: Put the cream on the skin (the web) between the 1st and 2nd toes and 2nd and 3rd toes of each foot.
 - If you are having a lymphangiogram of your **upper extremities**: Put the cream on the skin (the web) between the thumb and 2nd finger and the 2nd and 3rd finger of each hand.

- Wrap your toes or fingers with plastic wrap to keep the cream moist.
- Wear comfortable clothes and shoes.
- Bring with you the results of other imaging scans that were done to diagnose problems in your lymph system.
- *If you were assigned female at birth:* Tell the technologist if there is any chance you could be pregnant.

How is the scan done?

- A nuclear medicine technologist will help you to get ready for the scan.
 - If you are having a lymphangiogram of your lower extremities, you will need to remove your shoes and socks.
- A nuclear medicine doctor will give you 2 sets of injections into the skin between your toes or fingers. Both sets of injections will contain a small amount of *radioactive tracer* (also called a *radiotracer*). This tracer helps us see how well your lymph fluids are draining.
- We will take images right after the injections. Each set of images will take about 30 minutes.
- We may ask you to massage your legs or arms, walk around, or both.
- We may take more images 2, 4, 6, and even 24 hours after the injections. Depending on your lymphatic flow or drainage, the doctor may also need to take more images later.
- You may leave the hospital between injections. We advise you to walk around during this time to keep your lymph flowing.

What will I feel before and during the scan?

- Before the scan, you may feel a slight discomfort from the injections between your toes or fingers.
- You will need to lie on your back for the images. This may be uncomfortable for some patients.

What happens after the scan?

You may return to your usual activities. You do not need to do anything special.

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

After the test, a nuclear medicine doctor will review your images, write a report, and share the results with the provider who referred you for the test. Your own provider will talk with you about the results of your scan.

You and your provider will then decide the next step, such as treatment for a problem, as needed.

You may also read your results on your MyChart page. If you need copies of your images on disc, call 206.598.6206.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

- UWMC - Montlake
Imaging Services:
206.598.6200
- Harborview Nuclear
Medicine: 206.744.4473