

MRI: Lymphangiogram of Arms or Legs

How to prepare and what to expect

This handout explains an MRI lymphangiogram scan of arms or legs. It includes how the scan is done, how to prepare, what to expect, and how to get your results.

What is MRI?

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) is a way to take pictures of your internal organs and tissues. It uses radio waves and strong magnets to provide clear and detailed pictures. Even different types of tissue within the same organ are easily seen in an MRI image.

MRI will help your healthcare provider decide which treatment is best for your health condition.

What is an MRI lymphangiogram?

An MRI *lymphangiogram* is a scan of the lymph system. It is done to diagnose problems related to how lymph fluid flows or drains in your body. The scan usually involves taking several sets of pictures. Each set lasts 2 to 8 minutes.

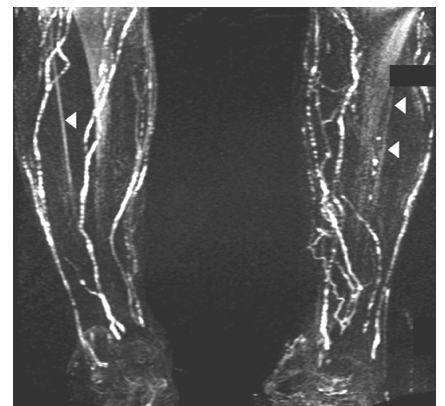
A lymphangiogram of the arms or legs takes images of the lymph system in that area of your body.

For Your Safety

Health Review

We need to know about certain **health conditions** before your MRI scan. Please tell us if you:

- Have any problems with your liver or kidneys
- Need a liver or kidney transplant
- Are on dialysis
- Have had any surgeries
- Have allergies to any drugs, *contrast* (X-ray dye), or latex



An MRI image of lymph vessels in the lower leg.

Screening for Metal

We also need to know if you have any **metal in or on your body** before we give you an MRI scan. The strong MRI magnets will pull on any *ferromagnetic* object, such as iron and some other metals.

If you have any metal on or in your body, an MRI can harm you. Even small amounts that do not harm your body can distort the MRI image.

Please tell MRI staff if you have:

- Aneurysm clips, a heart pacemaker (or artificial heart valve), an implanted port, an infusion catheter (such as Port-o-cath, Infusaport, or Lifeport), an intrauterine device (IUD), any metal plates, clips, pins, screws, or surgical staples, a prosthetic hip, or any implanted metal object in your body
 - Most times, surgical staples, clips, plates, pins, and screws are not a risk during MRI if they have been in place for more than 4 to 6 weeks. If needed, we may do an X-ray to check for metal.
- Tattoos or permanent eyeliner
- Medicine patches
- A bullet or shrapnel in your body
- Ever worked with metal

How do I prepare?

- Please talk with your provider if you have any concerns about managing pain or anxiety during your MRI scan.
- *Women:* Tell your provider if you are pregnant or breastfeeding, or if there is any chance you could be pregnant.
- If you take iron medicines or supplements, you must stop taking them 48 hours before your scan. Please talk with the provider who prescribed them if you have concerns.
- Remove compression stockings at least 48 hours before your MRI.

On the Day of Your Scan

- **Remove anything that might contain metal.** This includes:
 - Makeup and nail polish
 - Hairpins
 - Jewelry
 - Glasses, hearing aids, and any removable dental work

- You must change into a hospital gown before your scan. We will give you a gown when you arrive in the MRI department.
- If you have an insulin pump or a patch that delivers any type of drug, we will ask you to remove it.
- *Women:* Before the injection of contrast, tell the technologist if there is any chance you could be pregnant.

What happens during the scan?

- We will inject contrast through a small needle and an *intravenous* (IV) line in your arm vein over a 15-minute period. Your doctor will talk with you about this before your scan.
- You will lie on a sliding table. The MRI technologist will help you get into position.
- We will then inject another type of contrast. If we are scanning:
 - **Your arms:** We will inject the contrast in the skin between each of your fingers.
 - **Your legs:** We will inject the contrast in the skin between each of your toes.
- We will place a device called a *surface coil* on the area we will be scanning.
- The technologist will slide the table inside the MRI unit and then leave the room to take the MRI pictures.
- You will be able to talk with the technologist at any time through an intercom.
- The scan usually takes 45 to 60 minutes.
- We will ask you to hold very still as each picture is taken. We may also ask to hold your breath for some of the pictures.
- After the scan, we will ask you to wait until we check the images for quality. If needed, we will take more pictures.

What will I feel during the scan?

- MRI does not cause pain.
- Some patients may feel confined or uneasy (*claustrophobic*) when they are inside the MRI unit. Please tell the doctor who referred you for the MRI if you are claustrophobic. You may receive medicine to help you relax.

- You may feel warmth in the area where the pictures are taken. This is normal. If it bothers you, please tell the MRI technologist.
- You will hear loud tapping or knocking noises during the scan. We will provide earplugs or headphones with music to help block some of these sounds.

After the Scan

- Drink plenty of fluids the rest of the day to help flush the contrast out of your body. Try to drink 6 to 8 full glasses of fluid.
- Swelling can occur after contrast injections. This usually goes away within 24 hours.
- If you feel warmth increasing on the body part we scanned, apply cold compresses.
- You may shower, but avoid taking baths and sitting in a hot tub for the next 24 hours. This will help reduce your risk of infection.

When to Call

Call your provider or go to the Emergency Department if:

- You have a fever after your MRI.
- The warmth on the body part we scanned does not cool down after you apply cold compresses.

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

A radiologist skilled in MRI will review and interpret your MRI images. The radiologist will not talk with you about the results, but will send a report to your primary care or referring provider. Your own provider will give you the results.

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 Imaging Services:
206.598.6200
- Harborview Imaging
Services: 206.744.3105