Patient information

IV contrast during radiation therapy simulation scans

Contrast is a dye or fluid injected into a vein during some X-rays or CT imaging scans. It is sometimes used in radiation simulation. The contrast makes blood vessels easier to see on the imaging scans.

When is IV contrast used?

You may need contrast injected into a vein in your arm (intravenously or IV) through a cannula (needle) at your radiation therapy simulation appointment. Your doctor will tell you if you need contrast for your scan.

Do I need to prepare for IV contrast?

Your radiation therapy team will tell you if you need to have a blood test before your appointment.

You may need to sign a consent form and answer questions about:

- your medical history
- your allergies
- medicine(s) you are taking
- if you have had IV contrast before
- if you have had reactions to IV contrast before.

Tell your radiation therapy team if:

- you have kidney disease or diabetes
- you have had a kidney transplant
- you are taking medications such as metformin or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).

Do I need to stop or change any medicine I take?

Your radiation therapy team will tell you if you need to stop or change any medicine you usually take before or after you have the IV contrast.

Do **not** change or stop taking your medicine without talking to them first.

What happens before and during the scan?

Before the contrast is injected:

- Your radiation therapy team will put a cannula (needle) into a vein in your arm and cover it with a dressing.
- The cannula is connected to a tube and attached to a machine.
- Your radiation therapy team will set the machine to inject the contrast before or during your scan.
- The contrast will be injected through the cannula into your body.

If you have a central venous access device (CVAD), in some cases it may be used instead of a cannula.

What will I feel?

When the contrast is injected, you may experience the following:

- metallic taste in your mouth
- warm/hot feeling throughout your body
- feeling that you have passed urine or wet your pants (even though you have not).

These can happen as soon as contrast is injected or soon afterwards. It usually goes away within a few minutes.

What happens after the scan?

- After the IV contrast injection you will be observed for at least 30 minutes. This is to check for any delayed reactions that can occur.
- Your nurse will take out the cannula and place a dressing on your arm. You can remove the dressing the next day.
- Your radiation therapy team will talk to you about any changes you need to make to your medicine.
- You will then be able to leave.

Radiation therapy team

This is a team of health professionals who specialise in radiation therapy treatment. The team includes:

Radiation oncologist

Doctors who specialise in radiation therapy. They prescribe, plan and manage your care.

Radiation oncology registrars

Doctors who are training to specialise in radiation therapy treatment.

Radiation therapists

Allied health professionals trained in radiation therapy. They work with radiation oncologists to plan and deliver your treatment.

Radiation oncology nurses

Nurses trained in caring for patients who are having radiation therapy.

Important information

Some people have an allergic reaction to contrast. This can be mild or severe (anaphylaxis). It can happen when or soon after contrast is injected.

Signs and symptoms of a reaction include:

- feeling dizzy or faint
- having trouble breathing
- face or tongue swelling
- redness on the face or body
- skin rash.

If this happens at your appointment tell your team immediately.

If you have left the department IMMEDIATELY call an ambulance on 000 or go to your nearest hospital emergency department.

Important things to look out for during the scan:

Your radiation therapy team can help you at any time. Tell them immediately if you:

- feel sharp pain, discomfort, burning or stinging in your arm and/or
- see swelling or redness near the cannula
- see fluid leaking near the cannula.

Your radiation therapy team will stop the IV injection to manage these problems.

For information for patient and carers scan the QR code

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