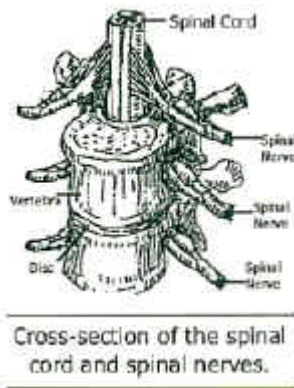


Myelogram Procedure and Home Care

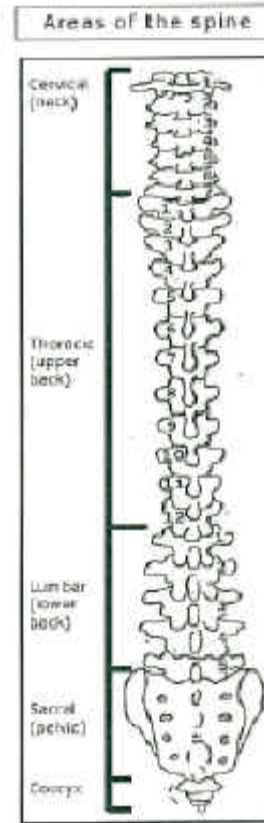
WHAT IS A MYELOGRAM?

A myelogram is an x-ray of your spine (backbone) and spinal cord (see diagram). The spinal cord begins at the bottom of the brain and goes halfway down the back.



The spinal cord has nerves that send messages to the brain to tell the body to walk, go to the bathroom, that something is hot, wet, etc. The spine has 26 vertebrae (bones) stacked one upon another. They protect the nerves in the spinal cord. Soft discs between each vertebra act as shock absorbers when you move. Spinal fluid surrounds the spinal cord.

During a myelogram, x-ray dye (contrast material) will be injected into the spinal fluid. The dye will mix with the spinal fluid and flow around the spinal cord. The spinal cord can then be seen on x-ray screens and recorded on x-ray film.



WHY AM I HAVING A MYELOGRAM?

Your doctor has scheduled you for a myelogram because of pain, numbness, tingling or some other symptom you have that may be related to your spinal cord or spine. The spinal cord cannot be seen on x-ray without the use of x-ray dye.

This study will give your doctors information that may help you in your diagnosis and treatment. Please let someone know if you may be pregnant; x-ray may harm an unborn child.

HOW DO I GET READY FOR MY MYELOGRAM?

Certain medicines should be stopped 2-3 days before the myelogram is done. These include medicines for seizures, nausea or depression. Please ask your doctor or call the Radiology Department at (336) 716-9380 to find out if you should stop taking a medicine.

You may eat and drink. We suggest that you have only a light meal before your myelogram is done. You may want to take your routine pain medicine before you have your myelogram. This will help if you have trouble lying on your stomach.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO DO THE MYELOGRAM?

The amount of time to do this test depends on how much of your spine is being examined. The usual amount of time is 30-45 minutes. If the entire spinal column needs to be examined, it will take 2-3 hours.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN THE X-RAY ROOM?

The x-ray doctor or staff will explain more about your myelogram. You will be asked to sign a form that explains the exam and gives us permission to do the x-ray. You will be asked about allergies you have to medicine, food or x-ray dye.

During this test, you will lie face down on a special table. You will have a cushion placed under your abdomen and another one under your chin. We will do our best to make you as comfortable as possible. Let us know if you need pain medicine.

The table will be tilted in different directions during the study. There will be handles for you to hold. Your feet will be secured in boots at the end of the table to prevent you from sliding down when the table is tilted.

The doctor will clean your back with a cool liquid (iodine). This kills germs on your skin. A small area of your back will be numbed.

When the area on your back is numb, a special needle will be put into the space around your spine. You may feel pressure. Let someone know if you feel uncomfortable, faint or dizzy. Someone will always be there if you need something.

The doctor uses x-ray and a TV-like screen while inserting the needle. If ordered by your doctor, a small amount of spinal fluid may be removed and sent to the lab for tests.

Next, the doctor slowly puts x-ray dye into the spinal fluid. The table will be moved so that your head is lower than your feet. The doctor will watch the x-ray screen as the dye flows up your spine. When each x-ray is taken, you will be asked to hold your breath and remain perfectly still.

It is important that the films have all the needed information before going from one step to the next. You may have to wait while films are being checked.

Sometimes your doctor may order a CT scan to be done after your myelogram. In this case, you will lie on a stretcher with your head slightly raised. This keeps the x-ray dye around your spinal column until the CT scan pictures are taken. Someone will explain more about this. Ask for the free publication of *Your CT Scan*. After the CT scan is completed, you will be taken back to your room.

Things to do after your myelogram

- Keep **your head elevated** at least 45 degrees for the first 8 hours. You may sit in a chair or sit upright in the bed.
- The dye is removed from your body through urine. So, **drink plenty of fluids** to help flush the dye from your body. You may eat what you want.

Things not to do after your myelogram

- Do NOT move around except to go to the bathroom for the first 2 hours after the myelogram.
- Do NOT bend from the waist for 8 hours.
- Do NOT lie flat
- Do NOT drive or operate machinery such as lawn mowers, lathes, skill or band saws for at least 48 hours.

WHAT IF I GET A HEADACHE?

If a headache occurs, the following may help:

- Take Tylenol® or ibuprofen as directed on the bottle.
- Drink fluids such as colas or coffee that contain caffeine. Caffeine helps relieve headaches.
- If you have tried medicine and fluids and you still have a headache, then lie down somewhere. Sometimes, a headache that occurs as a result of a myelogram may get better when you lie flat. After you have been flat for 30 minutes, sit on the side of the bed and then stand up. If the headache returns or gets worse when you sit or stand, then the headache is due to the myelogram. If it does not get better in two days, call your doctor.

WHEN DO I CALL THE DOCTOR?

Call your doctor if you have:

- Chills or fever of 101 degrees or greater
- A headache lasting more than two days
- Redness or drainage from the puncture site on your back

The information in this publication is general. If your doctor tells you something different, follow his or her advice and instructions.

Copyright © 2001

By the Department of Radiology

The information on this Website is provided for general informational purposes only and **SHOULD NOT** be relied upon as a substitute for sound professional medical advice, evaluation or care from your physician or other qualified

healthcare provider. If you have a medical problem or a health-related question, consult your physician or call Health On-Call at 336-716-2255 or 1-800-446-2255.

Copyright: Wake Forest University School of Medicine / Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center
Division of Radiologic Sciences
All rights reserved.
Medical Center Boulevard
Winston-Salem, NC 27157
(336) 716-5053