

Testing With IV Contrast Material

IV contrast material is a fluid that is used with some imaging tests. It is injected into your body through a vein. Contrast material is used when your health care providers need a detailed look at organs, tissues, or blood vessels that may not show up with the standard test. The material may be used when an X-ray, an MRI, a CT scan, or an ultrasound is done.

IV contrast material may be used for imaging tests that check:

- Muscles, skin, and fat.
- Brain.
- Digestive tract.
- Heart.
- Organs such as the liver, kidneys, lungs, bladder, and many others.
- Arteries and veins.

Tell a health care provider about:

- Any allergies you have, especially an allergy to contrast material.
- All medicines you are taking, including metformin, beta blockers, NSAIDs (such as ibuprofen), interleukin-2, vitamins, herbs, eye drops, creams, and over-the-counter medicines.
- Any problems you or family members have had with the use of contrast material.
- Any blood disorders you have, such as sickle cell anemia.
- Any surgeries you have had.
- Any medical conditions you have or have had, especially alcohol abuse, dehydration, asthma, or kidney, liver, or heart problems.
- Whether you are pregnant or may be pregnant.
- Whether you are breastfeeding. Most contrast materials are safe for use in breastfeeding women.

What are the risks?

Generally, this is a safe procedure. However, problems may occur, including:

- Headache.
- Itching, skin rash, and hives.
- Nausea and vomiting.
- Allergic reactions.
- Wheezing or difficulty breathing.
- Abnormal heart rate.
- Changes in blood pressure.
- Throat swelling.
- Kidney damage.

What happens before the procedure?

Medicines

Ask your health care provider about:

- Changing or stopping your regular medicines. This is especially important if you are taking diabetes medicines or blood thinners.

- Taking medicines such as aspirin and ibuprofen. These medicines can thin your blood. **Do not** take these medicines unless your health care provider tells you to take them.
- Taking over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, herbs, and supplements.

If you are at risk of having a reaction to the IV contrast material, you may be asked to take medicine before the procedure to prevent a reaction.

General instructions

- Follow instructions from your health care provider about eating or drinking restrictions.
- You may have an exam or lab tests to make sure that you can safely get IV contrast material.
- Ask if you will be given a medicine to help you relax (*sedative*) during the procedure. If so, plan to have someone take you home from the hospital or clinic.

What happens during the procedure?

- You may be given a sedative to help you relax.
- An IV will be inserted into one of your veins.
- Contrast material will be injected into your IV.
- You may feel warmth or flushing as the contrast material enters your bloodstream.
- You may have a metallic taste in your mouth for a few minutes.
- The needle may cause some discomfort and bruising.
- After the contrast material is in your body, the imaging test will be done.

The procedure may vary among health care providers and hospitals.

What can I expect after the procedure?

- The IV will be removed.
- You may be taken to a recovery area if sedation medicines were used. Your blood pressure, heart rate, breathing rate, and blood oxygen level will be monitored until you leave the hospital or clinic.

Follow these instructions at home:

- Take over-the-counter and prescription medicines only as told by your health care provider.
 - Your health care provider may tell you to not take certain medicines for a couple of days after the procedure. This is especially important if you are taking diabetes medicines.
- If you are told, drink enough fluid to keep your urine pale yellow. This will help to remove the contrast material out of your body.
- **Do not** drive for 24 hours if you were given a sedative during your procedure.
- It is up to you to get the results of your procedure. Ask your health care provider, or the department that is doing the procedure, when your results will be ready.
- Keep all follow-up visits as told by your health care provider. This is important.

Contact a health care provider if:

- You have redness, swelling, or pain near your IV site.

Get help right away if:

- You have an abnormal heart rhythm.
- You have trouble breathing.
- You have:
 - Chest pain.
 - Pain in your back, neck, arm, jaw, or stomach.
 - Nausea or sweating.
 - Hives or a rash.
- You start shaking and cannot stop.

These symptoms may represent a serious problem that is an emergency. Do not wait to see if the symptoms will go away. Get medical help right away. Call your local emergency services (911 in the U.S.). Do not drive yourself to the hospital.

Summary

- IV contrast material may be used for imaging tests to help your health care providers see your organs and tissues more clearly.
- Tell your health care provider if you are pregnant or may be pregnant.
- During the procedure, you may feel warmth or flushing as the contrast material enters your bloodstream.
- After the procedure, drink enough fluid to keep your urine pale yellow.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.