**Myelogram**

**What is a myelogram?**
A myelogram is an x-ray examination of your spinal cord and the nerves from your spinal cord. There is fluid-filled space around the spinal cord. A fine needle is inserted into this space and the doctor injects dye or contrast. The needle is then removed and a series of x-rays are taken of your spine. You may be asked to adopt different positions, such as lying on your back and then on your side.

**Why do I need a myelogram?**
Other investigations such as: plain x-rays, MRI scans and CT scans are likely to have been performed and are inconclusive. This test is designed to identify the cause of any pain or symptoms due to something pressing on a nerve root.

**Who has made the decision?**
The consultant team and/or specialist physiotherapist in charge of your case will have referred you on to the radiologist carrying out your myelogram. If after discussion with the radiologist you decide you do not want the test you can decide against it.

**What are the alternatives?**
Plain x-rays, MRI scans and CT scans as mentioned are likely to have been performed and have not identified the cause of your symptoms.

**Who will be performing the myelogram?**
The test is carried out by a radiologist (a doctor who specialises in x-ray procedures). The radiologist will explain the test to you before he starts, and answer any questions you may have.

The x-ray equipment is operated by a radiographer. Radiology nurses will also be present during the procedure. These members of staff will introduce themselves at the start of the examination.

Occasionally student radiographers or medical students will be present to observe the procedure.

**Where will it take place?**
In the fluoroscopy room in the Medical Imaging Department.

**How do I prepare for a myelogram?**
- **Myelography can be performed as an outpatient / day case.**
- **You will have had some blood tests performed before the procedure to check that you do not have an increased risk of bleeding.**
- **You are asked not to eat for 4 hours prior to the procedure. You may drink a little water.**
- **You will need someone to drive you home and to look after you for 24 hours.**
- **You should be prepared to stay overnight if necessary.**
- If you have any allergies or you have previously reacted to intravenous contrast medium, you must let the doctor know. Intravenous contrast medium is the injection we give you during some scans.

- If you are diabetic, please contact the Medical Imaging Department on **01392 402336** selecting option 2, in-patient enquiries and then option 8 for the radiology nurses.

- If you normally take any medication to thin your blood (anticoagulation or antiplatelet drugs) such as: warfarin / clopidogrel / aspirin / non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS / brufen / ibufen / nurofen) / dabigatran (Pradaxa) / rivaroxiban (Xarelto) / Apixaban (Eliquis) / phendione / acenocoumarol – then these may need to be stopped or altered. Please seek the advice of your hospital consultant or nurse specialist as soon as possible, ask your GP, or contact the Medical Imaging Department on **01392 402336** selecting option 2, in-patient enquiries and then option 8 for the radiology nurses.

- After discussion with your GP or referring clinician, and you can safely stop these medications it is recommended that:
  - Warfarin is stopped 6 days prior to your procedure
  - Aspirin is stopped 7 days prior to your procedure
  - Clopidogrel is stopped 7 days prior to your procedure
  - NSAIDS are stopped 2 days prior to your procedure
  - Rivaroxaban (Xarelto) and Apixaban (Eliquis) are stopped 2 days before your procedure. If you are taking Dabigatran (Pradaxa) please consult your doctor or contact the Medical Imaging Department on **01392 402336** selecting option 2, in-patient enquiries and then option 8 for the radiology nurses.

- Other medication should be taken as normal.

### Can I bring a friend or relative?

Yes, but for reasons of safety they will not be able to accompany you into the x-ray room.

### Valuables

Patients are encouraged to leave their valuables at home. It is the patient’s responsibility to ensure all valuables are on their person before leaving the Medical Imaging Department.

### What actually happens during a myelogram?

You will be asked to lie on an x-ray table. The skin on your lower back will be cleaned and local anaesthetic will be used to numb the area. Using the x-ray machine an injection is then made around your spinal cord to outline the nerve roots. Once the needle is removed further pictures will be taken of your spine and the nerve roots. You will then be transferred to the CT scanner for further imaging.

### Is it painful?

You will be given local anaesthetic but may feel some discomfort when the needle is put in and the dye is injected. This discomfort will only last for 1 or 2 minutes. If you feel it is too uncomfortable then let the doctor know.

### How long does it take?

A myelogram usually takes about 30 minutes to complete. You have a CT scan afterwards, which will take at least another 30 minutes.

### What happens afterwards?

- You will be taken to a comfortable chair for a cup of tea/coffee and we will monitor your blood pressure and pulse. You will need to stay in the department for 1 hour after the procedure.
■ Do not do anything strenuous for 24 hours and do not go to work the following day.
■ Do not drive for 24 hours post procedure.
■ The dye used for the test may cause headaches. It is important that you remain upright (or at least not lying flat) for at least 8 hours after the test as this helps the dye to disperse.
■ If you do develop a headache take Paracetamol or your regular painkillers.
■ **DRINK PLENTY OF FLUIDS FOR THE NEXT 24 HOURS** (not alcohol) this will help to flush the dye or contrast from your system.
■ If you feel unwell the following day, please contact your GP and inform them that you have had a myelogram.

What will happen to the results?

A report of the procedure will be recorded in your records immediately and also sent to your specialist within 48 hours.

We aim to report examinations, as soon as possible. Results will be sent to the Doctor who referred you for the investigation, as they may need further review and therefore it could be approximately 20 days before you are contacted by your Doctor.

Are there any risks or complications?

Any adverse reaction to this procedure is rare. This is a small possibility of an allergic reaction to the fluid or other drugs used. If this occurs it will be immediate, but very rare.

There is a small chance of introducing infection. We take every precaution to avoid this. There is a small risk of bleeding also.

Cancelling your appointment

If you are unable to attend for your appointment, we would be grateful if you could contact us on **402336 selecting option one**, as soon as possible. We can then offer your original appointment to another patient. A further date and time will then be arranged for you. Please be advised that if you fail to attend your appointment, it may be necessary to remove you from the radiology waiting list.

Please note: if you have had D&V (diarrhoea and vomiting) you will need to re-book your appointment unless you have been clear for the past 48 hours.

Finally...

Some of your questions should have been answered by this leaflet, but remember that this is only a starting point for discussion about your treatment with the doctors looking after you. Make sure you are satisfied that you have received enough information about the procedure, before you sign the consent form.

Contact us

If you have any queries or concerns you can contact us on **01392 402336**.

How to get to the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital at Wonford

**Park & Ride**

Our Dartline PR3 Park & Ride bus is quick and not expensive.

It runs from Wonford Hospital to Digby. Digby is near Tesco, the railway station and junction 30 of the M5. There are signs along some of the main roads into Exeter pointing to the RD&E park and ride.

The park and ride service runs from Monday - Friday. **There is no service at the weekend.**
By bus
Stagecoach buses H Service run to Wonford Hospital from the high street in the city centre Monday to Saturday. Limited Sunday service. They also run to Wonford Hospital from the Broadfields area.

Stagecoach buses from Exmouth (57), Dawlish (2), Torbay (X46), Teignmouth (2) and Plymouth (X38) stop next to the hospital on Barrack Road.

First Southern National bus X53 from Weymouth, Seaton, Beer and Sidford stops next to the hospital on Barrack Road. Turner’s Tours bus 369 from Chulmleigh, Lapford, Morchard Bishop and Crediton stops next to the hospital on Barrack Road and outside the main front entrance of the hospital.

By car
Follow signposts to the hospital from most of the main routes into Exeter. Follow signposts in the hospital grounds to our car parks.

Car parking is by pay & display, so please bring change.

The number of spaces is limited, so please leave plenty of time to find a space.

Using Sat Nav to find us?
Tap in postcode: EX2 5DW for RD&E Wonford.

For more information on how to get to the hospital, please use the following website: www.rdehospital.nhs.uk/patients/where

For more information on the Medical Imaging Department, please visit our website: www.rdehospital.nhs.uk/patients/services/medical-imaging