What is a Myelogram? Who Performs the Exam?

A myelogram is a radiologic examination of the spinal cord and the space surrounding it. A contrast medium (commonly called "dye") will be injected into your spinal canal. The contrast medium highlights the area of interest. A radiologist performs the examination. A radiologist is a medical doctor who specializes in the use of x-rays for diagnosis of medical conditions. The radiologist is assisted by a radiologic technologist, who is trained in the use of x-ray equipment.

Where is the Exam Performed? How Long Does the Exam Take?

Myelograms are performed at Mid-Delaware Imaging. Your exam probably will be completed in approximately 2 hours, but may take longer. The recovery period is about 1-2 hours. Plan to be at MDI for 1-3 hours. Arrange to have someone drive you home. In addition, plan on having someone stay with you for 24 hours following the procedure.

What Happens During the Exam?

There are various techniques used for administering the contrast medium. Usually, you lie on your stomach on the x-ray table. The radiologist will view your spine on a TV monitor to identify the best location to insert the needle. First, the area will be cleaned with antiseptic solution, which may feel a little cold. Second, you will feel a pin prick in the skin, and a brief burning sensation as a local anesthetic is injected. The radiologist will insert a needle and inject the contrast medium. The x-ray table will be tilted slowly to allow the contrast medium to travel to different levels of the spinal column. The radiologist will watch the flow of the contrast medium on a TV monitor. Then the technologist will take a series of x-rays while the table is tilted in various positions. You will then be taken to another room where a CT scan of the spine will be performed.

Before Your Exam:
1. If you are a smoker, please stop smoking the day before your test and on the day of your test. Smoking before the procedure may contribute to headaches or nausea after the procedure.

2. It is important to stay well hydrated until the time of your exam. For this reason, we recommend that you drink 4-8 ounces of fluids every 2 hours while you are awake. This regimen
may start at noon the day before your test and continue until 6 hours before your exam. You may
drink clear liquids up to 2 hours prior to the procedure. Examples of clear liquids include water,
tea, apple juice, carbonated beverages (soda pop), black coffee, sugar water, Hawaiian Punch.
These liquids should not include alcohol. Orange juice is NOT a clear liquid.

3. No food after midnight the night before this procedure. Only clear fluids should be consumed
as above. If your test is scheduled after noon, you may eat a small breakfast followed by fluids
leading up to the exam. Please do not each lunch.

4. If you are taking any of the following drugs, you should stop taking them 2 days before your
myelogram and resume taking them 2 days after your myelogram. Before stopping these
medications, please speak with your doctor.
   A) Certain antipsychotic medications, especially Phenothiazines. For example
      Thorazine, Compazine and Torecan.
   B) Certain antidepressants, such as Amitriptylines - for example, Elavil, Endep
   C) MAO Inhibitors, such as Parnate, Nardil, Marplan
   D) Ultram derivatives

5. Blood thinners, like Coumadin and Lovenox, need to be stopped prior to your procedure. You
must ask your physician for instructions regarding the length of time. If you take aspirin, please
stop the medication for 5 days before your procedure.

6. Allergies: If you are allergic to contrast (X-ray dye) or iodine, let your doctor know as soon as
possible. Let the radiologist know about your allergy a few days before your scheduled
myelogram.

8. Please bring any imaging studies you may have at home with you to MDI when you come for
your procedure. These include MRI’s, CT scans and plain spine x-rays.

9. If you are a woman of childbearing age, you will be asked if you could be pregnant. If there
is any chance that you may be pregnant, please obtain a pregnancy test through your doctor
before this procedure.

10. If you have any questions regarding medication, contact MDI at 302-734-9888.