

## Receiving IV contrast during a CT scan

This sheet answers common questions about having a CT procedure which involves the injection of contrast dye through a vein for radiotherapy planning. If you would like further information or have any particular worries please do not hesitate to ask your radiotherapy review specialist (RRS), doctor or radiographer.

In all cases a doctor or radiotherapy radiographer will explain the procedure to you and answer any questions you may have.

In most cases it will be possible for a friend or relative to accompany you for all or part of the procedure. Please ask your RRS, doctor or radiographer.

### What is IV contrast?

IV contrast is a type of dye that allows veins, arteries and some organs and structures in your body to be displayed more clearly.

### Before your CT planning scan

When you arrive for your CT planning scan a radiotherapy radiographer will explain the procedure to you. The radiographer will also complete a questionnaire with you. This aims to identify patients who may be at risk of developing a reaction to the contrast dye. On very rare occasions reactions may occur.

Prior to having the CT scan one of the radiotherapy review specialists or doctors will place a needle in the back of your hand or in your elbow to allow the contrast to be given.

### How is the CT planning scan done?

The CT scanner is composed of a moving couch which passes through a large donut-shaped ring. As you pass through the ring the scanner takes a complete 360 degree image of you that is then sent to its computer. The scan takes approximately 10-15 minutes. During a specific period in the CT scan you will be given an injection of the contrast. It may cause you to experience mild symptoms, such as a strange taste in your mouth, feeling like you have urinated or a warm, flushed feeling. These side effects will be explained to you before the injection is administered.

### After your CT planning scan

The radiographers will ask you to wait in the department for 15 minutes to make sure you have no reaction to the contrast. If you are feeling okay you may go home. It is important that you keep yourself hydrated after the procedure. Aim to drink a couple of glasses of water before you leave the department, and when you get home.

## Risks and side-effects

### Contrast reactions

Reactions to IV contrast are rare but they can happen and range from mild to severe. These may happen immediately or several hours after you have left the department.

#### Mild reactions

Rash  
Itchy feeling  
Sneezing  
Nausea  
Vomiting

#### Severe reactions

Swelling around the face/neck/throat  
Difficulty breathing

## What should I do if I think I am having a reaction but have left the Royal Free Hospital?

### Mild reaction

- Call the radiotherapy department on 020 7830 2919 (between 8.45am-5pm). Explain that you recently had an IV contrast CT scan and what symptoms you are having. The radiographer will provide you with follow up instructions. Outside of these hours call your GP or NHS direct on 111.

### Severe reactions

- Go to your nearest accident and emergency department and explain that you recently had an IV contrast scan.

## Do you have any further questions?

If you have any further questions about the procedure then please ask one of the radiographers or the RRS. If you have left the radiotherapy department the radiographers can be contacted on the number above.

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