



Royal Free London
NHS Foundation Trust

Having a radiotherapy CT scan with intravenous (IV) contrast

Information for patients

This leaflet answers common questions about having a radiotherapy CT scan with intravenous (IV) contrast.

If you would like further information, or have any particular worries, please do not hesitate to ask your radiotherapy radiographer or radiotherapy review specialist.

Your 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 radiographer or doctor.

What is intravenous (IV) contrast?

Contrast is a type of dye that allows veins, arteries and some organs and structures in your body to be displayed more clearly on a CT scan and helps with your radiotherapy planning. An IV contrast means that the contrast is injected into a vein.

Before your procedure

When you arrive for your planning CT scan, a radiotherapy radiographer will explain the procedure to you. You may be asked to change into a hospital gown.

The radiographer will complete a questionnaire with you which will tell us what medications you are currently taking and any conditions you may already have. It also aims to identify if you may be at risk of developing a reaction to the contrast dye. On very rare occasions reactions may occur. Information is included below about risks and side effects.

Prior to having the CT scan one of the radiotherapy radiographers will place a flexible cannula tube in your arm using a needle to allow the contrast to be injected.

After your intravenous injection

The radiographers will ask you to wait in the department for 30 minutes to make sure you do not have a reaction to the contrast dye you have been given. If you are feeling okay and have no reaction, you will be able to go home. It is important that you keep yourself hydrated after the procedure and for the next 48 hours. Try to drink two-three litres of water a day during this time.

Risks and side-effects

Contrast dye 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	Severe reactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• rash/itchy feeling• sneezing• nausea or vomiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• swelling around the face/neck/throat• difficulty breathing

What should I do if I think I am having a reaction, but I have left the hospital?

Mild reactions

Call the radiotherapy department and explain that you recently had an IV contrast CT scan and describe the symptoms you are having. The radiographer will provide you with follow up instructions. Telephone numbers for the department can be found below.

Outside of these hours call your GP or NHS direct on 111.

Severe reactions

Go to your nearest emergency department and explain that you recently had a CT scan with an IV contrast injection.

Do you have any further questions?

Please speak to one of the radiographers or the radiotherapy review specialist.

Radiotherapy review specialist team

Telephone: 020 7830 2919, Monday-Friday 8:45am to 5pm

Radiotherapy department reception

Telephone: 020 7830 2919, Monday-Friday 8:45am to 5pm.

More information

For more information about the radiotherapy service at the Royal Free London, please visit our website:

www.royalfree.nhs.uk/services/services-a-z/cancer-services/radiotherapy-services/

Your feedback

If you have any feedback on this leaflet or for a list of references for it, please email: rf.communications@nhs.net

Alternative formats

This leaflet is also available in large print. If you need this leaflet in another format – for example Braille, a language other than English or audio – please speak to a member of staff.

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