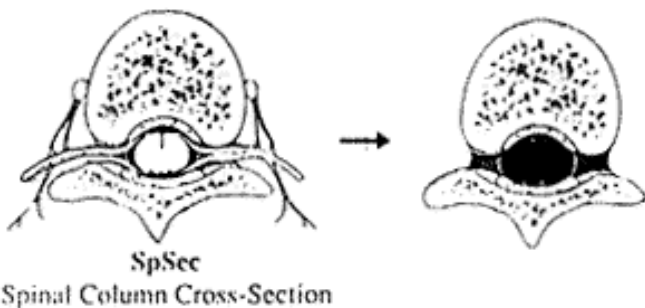


Understanding Myelography/Myelogram

What is a myelogram?

A myelogram is a special kind of X-ray of the spinal canal. The spinal canal is the spinal cord and the fluid-filled space around it (the subarachnoid space). The spinal canal does not show up on a regular X-ray. For a myelogram X-ray, the doctor injects contrast fluid into the spinal canal through a space between the vertebrae (backbones). The contrast fluid highlights the spinal canal. The doctor can now see this part of the central nervous system on the X-ray.



How is this done?

- Your child comes to the day • care surgery area on the day of the X-ray. He/she changes into a hospital gown, no underwear or jewellery.
- This test is done in the Radiology Department by a radiologist (a specialist in X-rays and other kinds of medical pictures).
- Your child needs to lie perfectly still for this procedure. This is difficult so most children have a general anesthetic so they are asleep for the test. If your child does not have a general anesthetic the radiologist “freezes” the area with a local anesthetic. In the day care, an anesthetist will speak with you about what is best for your child.

- When the skin feels numb, or after your child is asleep, the radiologist:
 - puts a thin needle into the spinal canal,
 - removes a small amount of spinal fluid for laboratory tests,
 - injects the contrast fluid into the spinal canal,
 - tilts the table up or down to take X-rays of different parts of the canal,
 - does a CT scan, for information about CT scans, see the pamphlet called **CT Scans (BCCH1109)**,
 - after the X-ray, your child moves to a ward to rest overnight in the hospital.

How does it feel?

- If your child has a general anesthetic, s/he will not feel or remember anything.
- If your child is awake, s/he may feel pressure over the spine when the doctor first puts in the needle. Your child feels no other pain while the doctor takes the X-rays but myelography can be long and tiring for children who are awake. It is uncomfortable and difficult to lie still a long time on the hard table.

How to prepare for the X-ray?

- The radiologist will discuss what happens during the myelogram with you and your child. A parent (or guardian) must sign a consent form before the X-ray. The consent form is a legal document. You sign it to say you understand what the myelogram is and its risks and benefits for your child.
- Tell the radiologist if your child has any allergies. Allergic reactions to the contrast dye are unusual but can be serious.

- If your child is to have a general anesthetic, s/he must **not eat or drink** for a few hours before the X-ray. The nurse in day care surgery will telephone you the day before the X-ray. She explains the fasting instructions. Please follow these instructions. It is not safe for your child to have an anesthetic unless his/her stomach is completely empty.
- If your child will be awake during the X-ray s/he may like to bring a cushion, or taped music, to help her/him relax. You are welcome to stay with your child for the X-ray, after the radiologist injects the contrast fluid.

Are there any side/after effects?

- Some children may have a headache, feel sick, or throw up in the first 12 hours after the X-ray.
- Some people have nightmares and confusion the day after the test. Children do not seem to have any of these.

How can you help your child after the X-ray?

- Your child stays in hospital for 24 hours after the X-ray. S/he will have fewer after effects if s/he rests quietly in bed. Bring a favourite blanket, soft toy, taped music, books to read for this time. We tilt the head of the bed and support your child's head with pillows to keep it still. When your child lies in this position it helps keep the contrast fluid out of the head. The contrast fluid can cause headaches or sickness. (S/He can get up to go to the bathroom.)
- Offer your child extra drinks. The drinks help to flush the contrast fluid out of the body and ease any headache or sickness.

How do you get the results of the X-ray?

The radiologist will contact your doctor about what s/he sees in the X-rays. Call your doctor within one week for the results.

Ways you can help.

Explain what will happen so your child understands. A pamphlet called, "**Helping Your Child Manage Medical & Surgical Procedures**" (BCCH1209), may help. You can find it in the Family Resource Library in BCCH or on the Family Resource Library Website at www.bcchildrens.ca/fri

Outpatients.

The hospital is a busy place.

Although there is pay parking on the site, it can be hard to find a space.

You will be preadmitted and should arrive in Daycare at the time given to you by the Daycare Nurse when she calls you on the day prior to the exam.

The Daycare is on the main floor of BC's Children's Hospital.