Procedure Information: Myelogram

What is a Myelogram?
A Myelogram is radiographic exam that shows problems of the spine (backbone). A myelogram involves the placing of a spinal needle into the spinal canal, injecting contrast material (X-ray dye) in the space around the spinal cord and nerve roots and taking X-rays.

When is a Myelogram ordered?
If the bones are out of place in any way, they might be pressing on a nerve which can cause pain and/or numbness and tingling in your arms and legs. A myelogram is most commonly used to detect abnormalities affecting the spinal cord, the spinal canal, the spinal nerve roots and the blood vessels that supply the spinal cord, such as:

- Herniated discs
- Infections
- Spinal stenosis
- Spinal Lesions
- Tumors
- Inflammation

Help when planning surgery for spinal instrumentation (screws, plates, rods, etc)

Patient Preparation
Your doctor will schedule your Myelogram and give you instructions on how to prepare for the exam. You may eat and drink small amounts before the exam. Report 15 minutes before your scheduled appointment time.

What happens during a Myelogram procedure?
Your procedure starts and ends in Same Day Surgery. Upon arrival at SDS you will be asked to sign a written consent form. Report any allergies you have to your nurse. You then will be asked to remove your clothing and undergarments, put on a hospital gown and pants both tied in the back so the doctor will be able to access your back easily. You may have a small area of your lower back shaved. You will be given medicine to relax before you go to your test. You will then be taken to the radiology department on your stretcher. You will be awake for the entire test. The radiographer will verify your identity (name and birth date) and give a brief description of exam. You will be asked to lie on your stomach on the x-ray table.

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The lower back will be prepared by the staff.

**What happens during a Myelogram procedure?**
Your doctor will use a small needle and medicine to numb the skin on your lower back. A needle with x-ray contrast is put into a spot in your spinal column. You may have a warm feeling when the dye is injected. The needle is then removed and a bandage is put over the injection area. The technologist takes x-rays as you are placed in different positions. After the exam you are taken back to SDS for approximately 1-2 hours while the nurse monitors your recovery. You will be asked to keep your head at a 45 degree angle and to rest quietly for the next 24 hrs. You are allowed brief trips to the bathroom. Avoid heavy lifting for 24 hours. Drink plenty of fluids. Sleep with your head elevated and do not bend over or lower your head below your heart. Do not bend over to tie your shoes or pick things up off the floor. This causes pressure in your head and may cause a headache.

**Length of procedure**
A Myelogram test is usually completed with 30 minutes; however there are times when you may have to wait before or after your Myelograms.

**What will I experience during and after the procedure?**
You may feel the needle stick and pressure when the doctor numbs and inserts the needle into your back. Heaviness in your lower back and legs is common after the exam due to the contrast that was injected. This will be relieved as your body absorbs the contrast.
If you get a bad headache:
- Rest quietly
- Lie flat
- Drink more fluids than usual
- Take the pain medicine your doctor ordered
- Call your doctor if you are vomiting and unable to keep fluids down

**What are the risks?**
Any procedure where the skin is broken always carries a slight risk of infection. Be cautious of any swelling or increase of pain at area of injection. There is a very slight risk of an allergic reaction. Consult your doctor if you have concerns following the exam.