Gadolinium (Dotarem®) contrast injection

This leaflet contains information on gadolinium (also known by its brand name Dotarem®), which is a contrast (dye) used during MRI scans. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you. Further information about gadolinium is available in the manufacturer’s patient information leaflet – please ask us if you would like a copy.

What is gadolinium?

Gadolinium (Dotarem®) is a clear, colourless fluid that is used to make the images clearer during an MRI scan and help with diagnosis. A radiologist (a specialist doctor trained in studying scans and X-rays) or a senior radiographer (a specially trained member of the radiology team who performs the MRI scan) will decide if you need gadolinium and discuss this with you.

How is it given?

Gadolinium is injected into one of your veins via a needle or a cannula (a soft, thin plastic tube) during your scan. The cannula is inserted through your skin into a vein using a needle. Once the cannula is in place the needle is removed, leaving the small, thin plastic tube in the blood vessel. This should be comfortable and will only be in place until your scan is finished.

Are there any side effects?

Gadolinium is not suitable for everybody. The radiographer or radiologist will decide if it is appropriate for you.

In people who have severely reduced kidney function or hepatorenal syndrome (a condition involving reduced function of the liver and kidneys), gadolinium should only be used with radiologist approval. This group of patients cannot excrete gadolinium through urine and the retained gadolinium may cause problems.

It is important that you tell the radiographer or radiologist before your scan if you have any history of kidney problems.

Please also let us know if you have had a previous allergic reaction to a contrast agent.

Gadolinium may cause side effects in some people but these are usually mild and short lasting. Some of the more common side effects include:

- injection site pain
- nausea
- vomiting
- itching
- rash
- headache
- parasthesia (abnormal skin sensation, such as prickling, burning or tingling).
If you have any concerns about side effects, please speak to the staff caring for you.

Occasionally the injection may leak out from the vein to the tissues under the skin – this is known as extravasation. If this happens, you will experience a stinging sensation where the contrast has gone into the tissue and it can be painful. If you would like more information about this please ask a member of staff for our leaflet, **Contrast injection leak guidance (extravasation)**

Allergic reactions to gadolinium contrast agents are uncommon but do occur. Most occur during the injection or within the first hour following administration; however some can occur up to several days later.

Serious allergic reactions are rare, however please seek immediate medical attention if you have any of the following:

- swelling of the face, mouth, hands, feet or throat
- difficulty in breathing or swallowing
- fainting
- coughing/wheezing/sneezing
- eye irritation
- rash/hives/itchy red skin.

**Contact us**

If you have any questions or concerns, or if you experience any of the symptoms listed above, please contact the MRI Department, **t: 020 7188 3933** (Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm). Out of hours, please contact your GP or go to your local Emergency Department (A&E) for advice.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets**

**Pharmacy Medicines Helpline**

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.
**t: 020 7188 8748**, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

**Your comments and concerns**

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.
**t: 020 7188 8801** (PALS)  **e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk**
**t: 020 7188 3514** (complaints)  **e: complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk**

**Language and accessible support services**

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch.
**t: 020 7188 8815  e: languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk**