A guide to your herniogram

Your consultant has asked for you to have a herniogram. This is a test which involves injecting dye through a narrow needle which has been passed through the lower abdomen and then using x-rays to find out if you have a hernia.

If you are taking WARFARIN, CLOPIDOGREL (Plavix) or CILOSTAZOL (Pletal) please telephone the X-Ray Department, Royal Derby Hospital on 01332 783215 for advice. You will need to stop taking this medication several days before the procedure.

What are the risks, consequences and alternatives associated with having a herniogram?

Most procedures are straightforward, however as with any procedure there is a small chance of side-effects or complications such as:

- **Abdominal pain/discomfort.** Even after numbing the skin with local anaesthetic some pain or discomfort may be felt when the needle is passed into the abdomen or when the dye is injected through the needle.

- **Feeling faint.** You may feel a little faint, hot and sweaty during the procedure. This usually passes off quickly. If it is severe we will stop the procedure.

- **Bowel puncture** (this occurs in 3% of patients). The needle is accidentally passed into the bowel. If this occurs you will be kept in hospital overnight for antibiotics and observation.

- **Bleeding.** A little bruising/tenderness at the site of the injection on the lower abdomen is quite common. Much less common is internal bleeding (2% of patients) caused by the needle puncturing a blood vessel. If this occurs you will be kept in hospital overnight for observation.

- **Infection/peritonitis.** Rarely infection can occur within the skin at the site of the injection in the lower abdomen or within the abdomen itself (less than 1% of patients).

If the skin of the lower abdomen becomes red, hot and tender, or if you become unwell with severe abdominal pain after the procedure you must seek medical attention from your GP, referring consultant or attend the Accident and Emergency Department.

If you require further details about these or other possible complications, please contact the radiologist (x-ray doctor) at the Royal Derby Hospital (telephone number overleaf) before the procedure.
Radiation risks
All x-ray procedures involve some exposure to radiation and so pose a degree of risk. Everyone is exposed to natural background radiation from the environment throughout their lives. One in 3 people will develop cancer at some point in their lives due to many various causes including environmental radiation. Radiation from a medical procedure involving x-rays can add very slightly to this risk. The length and level of exposure to radiation from x-rays in medical procedures is very strictly controlled and is kept to the minimum amount possible.

The added risk of cancer due to this radiation is extremely small. Your doctor has determined that the risk to your health of not having this procedure is considerably greater than the risk from the radiation used.

Alternatives
Your consultant has recommended this investigation as being the best option. However, the alternatives are an ultrasound, MRI or a CT scan - which may or may not show up the hernia. If you would like more information about these investigations, please speak to your consultant or one of the nurses caring for you.

There is also the option of not undertaking any investigation at all. The consequence of this is that the cause of your symptoms may not be found. If you would like more information please speak to your consultant or one of the nurses caring for you.

What happens when I come into hospital?
You will be given an appointment to attend the X-Ray Department.

You may eat a normal breakfast/lunch on the day of the procedure.

The procedure will be explained to you by the consultant performing it. Please ask any questions or queries at this stage. If you agree to have the procedure you will be asked to sign a consent form.

You will be asked to change into a gown, remove any underwear and empty your bladder immediately before the procedure.

What happens during my herniogram?
You will be asked to lie flat on the x-ray table and your lower abdomen will be cleaned.

A small area of skin will be numbed by local anaesthetic just below your belly button (umbilicus).

A needle will be passed through the numbed area and (when in the right place) dye will be injected into your abdomen.

The needle will then be removed and a plaster will be placed over the small cut on your abdomen.

The table you are lying on will then be tilted up (so you are virtually standing) and x-ray pictures will be taken.
What happens after my herniogram?

You will be asked to stay in the department for about 30 minutes and then be allowed home.

You may return to normal activities but avoid strenuous exercise and lifting for 24 hours.

If you feel some lower abdominal pain/discomfort after this procedure take a mild painkiller such as Paracetamol - follow the manufacturer’s instructions and do not exceed the stated dose. If the pain becomes prolonged or severe, seek further medical advice.

If the skin of the lower abdomen becomes red, hot and tender, or if you become unwell with severe abdominal pain after the procedure you must seek medical attention from your GP, referring consultant or attend the Accident and Emergency Department.

Your referring consultant will arrange an outpatient appointment with you, to discuss the results of your herniogram.

References


