

Intravenous Urogram (IVU) examination

Your doctor has referred you for an intravenous urogram (IVU). The information in this leaflet should explain what will happen before, during and after this test and also answer any questions that you may have.

What is an IVU?

An IVU is an X-ray examination of your kidneys and bladder. During the test you will be given an injection of a contrast agent (an X-ray 'dye'), which highlights your kidneys and bladder making them stand out much better than on an ordinary X-ray image. It is possible to see some detail of the internal structure of the kidneys and assess roughly how well each kidney is working.

Before your IVU

If you are pregnant, or think you may be, please let us know as soon as possible as a different test may be carried out instead. If you suffer from diabetes, you must also let us know. You will find our telephone number on your appointment letter.

What will happen during the test?

You will be asked to go to the toilet to empty your bladder (pass urine) before being taken into the X-ray room. The examination will be explained to you and you will have the opportunity to ask any questions. You will need to lie on the X-ray couch while an X-ray of your abdomen (tummy) is taken. The radiographer will ask you if you have any known allergies or health problems before giving you the injection of dye. The injection will be into a vein in the elbow or the back of the hand. Although the contrast agent used is often referred to as a dye it is a clear liquid which shows up on X-rays. After the injection, you will have a few more X-rays of your abdomen (tummy) taken. Before the last X-ray, you will be asked to go to the toilet to empty your bladder again. The test will usually take around 45 minutes, although this can vary. You will be able to leave as soon as your examination is finished and return to your normal daily activities.

When will I get the results of the test?

You will not normally be given the results on the day of your examination. A radiologist (a doctor, who is specially trained to interpret X-rays) will write a report on the findings and these will be sent back to the doctor that referred you. Your doctor should have the results in around 7-10 days.

Are there any risks?

All X-ray procedures involve exposure to ionising radiation in varying amounts. The use of radiation is strictly controlled and is kept to the minimum required. For this examination, the extra radiation is equivalent to what you would receive from the atmosphere (background radiation) over a period of 12 to 14 months.

The injection of X-ray dye for this test is generally very safe. However, there is a small risk of a reaction which could include feeling warm for a few minutes, developing a skin rash or feeling breathless. It is also possible, but extremely rare, that you could have an allergic reaction to the dye.

As with any procedure, unforeseen complications can occur, although this is very rare. Despite these risks it is important to remember that the risk of missing a serious problem by not having the test done could be much greater.

Commonly asked questions

If you have any questions or concerns that are not covered by this leaflet, please contact the Medical Imaging Department on the telephone number given on your appointment letter. We will do our best to make your visit as pleasant as possible.