

What is X-Ray Dye?

X-Ray dye, also known as contrast material or contrast medium (not a "dye" at all) is any internally administered substance that has a different density from soft tissue on x-ray studies or CT scanning. Having a different density than soft tissues means the x-ray interacts in such a way that provides "contrast" between adjacent structures. This allows the radiologist to see anatomy more clearly.

Types of contrast include:

Barium or water, used to make parts of the gastrointestinal tract visible on x-ray.

Iodine in water, used for arthrography.

Water-soluble iodine, used to make blood vessels visible; to demonstrate the inner structures of the urinary tract (kidneys, ureters and bladder); and to outline joints (the spaces between two bones).

Paramagnetic substances used in magnetic resonance imaging.

Allergies to Contrast

It is important to inform the technologist at the time of your examination or procedure if you have any history of reactions / allergies to a contrast agent such as x-ray dye, medications or substances such as latex.

Today there is a low incidence of reaction to contrast. However, the following factors have been identified as increasing the risk for a contrast medium reaction:

- History of reaction to contrast agents
- Asthma or severe allergies
- Sickle cell anemia
- Multiple myeloma, renal insufficiency and diabetes mellitus

Contrast reactions range from mild (nausea, peculiar taste in mouth) to severe (respiratory and / or cardiac arrest). Patients with a history of contrast reaction can be pretreated prior to the procedure (ask your doctor).

At Concord Imaging Center, we use state-of-the-art "non-ionic" contrast media. This further reduces the risk of reaction for our patients.