

You have been referred for a procedure that may require the use of an x-ray dye called contrast medium. This brief explains **what contrast medium is** and **why it may be necessary** for your examination.

What is Contrast Medium?

Contrast medium is a substance that changes the appearance of your blood vessels or intestinal tract when viewed on an x-ray. It allows us to examine specific parts of your body in detail to answer the questions raised by your doctor. Contrast may be administered orally as a water-based drink, or may be injected intravenously (IV) into your arm.

When and why is Oral Contrast used?

Oral contrast is used to coat the internal workings of your **digestive system**. It helps us to identify your gastrointestinal tract from the adjacent muscles and organs, and is particularly useful to us in assessing the bowel.

When and why is IV Contrast used?

IV Contrast is used to distinguish **blood vessels** from the adjacent muscles and organs. It helps us to examine your blood flow to identify blockages, and enables us to assess your organ function.

There are some health conditions that make IV contrast procedures inadvisable. If you think any of the following apply to you, please discuss them with

your doctor before attending our clinic:

- You have a demonstrated allergy to iodine
- You have or may have impaired kidney function
- You are a diabetic and have been prescribed Metformin medication
- You have also been referred for a Nuclear Medicine thyroid scan
- You are breast feeding or suspect that you may be pregnant

Why do you need to Fast Beforehand?

There are **two main reasons for fasting** prior to a CT examination:

1. If you have eaten close to having a CT scan, your stomach will show shape defects that can give the appearance of a tumour on x-ray. This may lead to a mis-diagnosis, causing unnecessary stress for you, your family and your doctor.
2. You may experience mild to significant nausea after an IV contrast injection. This can induce vomiting and if your stomach is full, there is a risk you will regurgitate your stomach contents. This is unpleasant for you and our staff and is easily avoided through a period of fasting.

Smoking is also restricted as it fills your stomach and bowel with air which degrades the x-ray images.

Note: Any medication should be continued as long as it does not have to be taken with food, **except for** diabetic medications (oral tablets) that are Metformin types. For advice on Metformin use please speak with your doctor. If you are a diabetic, you should only fast for two hours instead of four.