

Gadolinium based contrast agent injection (Dotarem® and Primovist®) for MRI Scanning

This leaflet provides information on gadolinium based contrast agent (also known by brand names Dotarem® and Primovist®), which is a dye used during MRI scans. Further information about the medicine is available in the manufacturer's patient information leaflet – please ask us if you would like a copy.

If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is a gadolinium based contrast agent?

Gadolinium based contrast agent (GBCA) helps to diagnose a range of diseases. It is a clear colourless fluid that is used like a dye to make the MRI images clearer. This may help with diagnosis. A radiologist (a specialist doctor trained in studying medical images, such as MRI 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 a scan with GBCA to help with your treatment. Your doctor will discuss this with you and will use the lowest dose required for a clear image.

How is it given?

GBCA is injected into one of your veins via a needle or a cannula (a soft, hollow, 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 a 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?

GBCA is not suitable for everybody and the radiographer or radiologist will decide if it is appropriate for you.

If you are pregnant or could be pregnant or if you are breast feeding, please notify a radiographer or radiologist.

GBCA should not be used in patients with reduced kidney function or hepatorenal syndrome (a condition involving reduced function of the liver and kidneys) since it can cause nephrogenic systemic fibrosis in patients with severely reduced kidney function.

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

GBCA 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 and paraesthesia (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 has happened, 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 speak to the staff caring for you.

Allergic reactions to GBCAs 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 after.

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

Serious allergic reactions have been rarely reported. **Please seek immediate medical attention** if you have any of the following:

Swelling of face, mouth, hands, feet or throat

Coughing / wheezing / sneezing

Difficulty in breathing or swallowing

Eye irritation

Fainting

Rash / hives / itchy red skin

It is known that small amounts of gadolinium may remain in the brain after a scan with GBCA. There is currently no evidence that this causes any harm but as a precaution we have stopped using some types of GBCA.

If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, or experience any of the symptoms on page 1, please contact the MRI department on 020 8725 3021 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm).

Out of hours, please contact your GP or go to your local emergency (A&E) department for advice.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm
Friday between 10am and 2pm.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing.

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS UK

The NHS provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health. **Web:** www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones. **Tel:** 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website

(www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.

Reference: MRI_GAD_LP_01 Published: September 2024 Review date: September 2026

