



WRHN

Waterloo Regional
Health Network

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Owner Mike Sharma
Area Medical Imaging Program
Applicability WRHN - All Sites
Topic Tags IV contrast, allergy, gadolinium + 3 more

Pre-Medication for Contrast Media Allergies

PURPOSE

To mitigate allergic type reactions by identifying and pre-medicating patients who have had previously confirmed allergic reactions to contrast media agents of a similar class and require intravenous contrast for their requested exam. Intravenous contrast agents provide more detailed imaging by enhancing vascular structures, organs and tissues. Proper pre-medication can prevent examination, diagnosis and treatment delays. This policy considers recommendations outlined in the American College of Radiology Manual on Contrast Media and complies with Accreditation Canada guidelines (allergy screening prior to contrast administration).

POLICY

Patients who require intravenous contrast media for an imaging study who have previously had a confirmed mild or moderate allergic event to the same class of contrast media must be pre-medicated.

The ordering provider is responsible for ordering pre-medication.

A consultation between the radiologist and referring provider is required to provide direction for patients with known severe reactions.

Staff will follow the direction outlined in the procedure below when allergies to contrast are disclosed or documented in the patient's chart.

SCOPE

This policy applies to patients that require intravenous contrast for their medical imaging exam, ordering providers, Medical Radiation Technologists (MRT) working in medical imaging, nurses working in

medical imaging and radiologists at all Waterloo Regional Health Network (WHRN) sites.

INCLUSION CRITERIA:

- Examinations requested in the medical imaging department that have been protocolled with an injection of intravenous contrast.

EXCLUSION CRITERIA:

- Code stroke patients (patients are managed and screened by the attending emergency department & stroke physicians)
- Radiation Therapy
- Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory

DEFINITIONS

Mild allergic reaction: no more than 1-2 hives, nasal congestion, sneezing and/or scratchy throat that does not progress to more severe reactions after 15 minutes of observation.

Moderate allergic reaction: 3 or more hives, extensive rash, facial/oral swelling, throat tightness or hoarseness, wheezing.

Severe allergic reaction: shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, unresponsiveness, anaphylactic shock, respiratory or cardiac arrest.

Similar class contrast agent: same elemental ingredient (ie. iodine based vs gadolinium based).

PROCEDURE:

1. Relevant allergy information should be obtained and provided by the ordering provider on the exam requisition or be available in the patient's chart.
2. Patients that report a previous mild or moderate allergic reaction to contrast media of a similar class must be pre-medicated prior to their imaging exam.
3. A consultation must be initiated by the ordering provider to the radiologist for patients with a history of severe allergic reaction. If proceeding with contrast, documentation of the outcome of this consultation must be documented by the ordering provider in the form of a communication order in the patient's chart or on the paper requisition (outpatients). The order must convey the direction to proceed with administration of contrast. If this has not occurred prior to the patient arriving for their appointment, the technologist will contact the assigned radiologist for direction. This requirement will be available to the ordering providers in the following ways:
 - A. Organizational policy
 - B. Electronic requisition program
 - C. Requirements faxed back by clerical if allergy is indicated on the paper requisition
4. Patients will be pre-medicated according to **Appendix A: Pre-Medication Regimen for Contrast Allergy.**

5. The accelerated regimen will only be prescribed if the ordering provider determines that the 13 hour regimen would cause an adverse delay in care and treatment.
6. In emergency situations where contrast is necessary but there is insufficient time for pre-medication to take effect (less than 4 hours prior to administration of contrast), the ordering provider must contact the assigned radiologist. The ordering provider will write a communication order in the chart if proceeding with contrast and will accompany the patient to the imaging department to provide support should a reaction occur. The communication order must convey the direction to proceed with administration of contrast.
7. If an ordering provider modifies the recommended pre-medication prescription based on patient history (ie. patient already taking steroids), the ordering provider must write a communication order in the chart or on the paper requisition. The communication order must convey the direction to proceed with a modified regimen. The modified regimen must include one steroid and one antihistamine.
8. Medical Radiation Technologists (MRT's) and nurses working in medical imaging must verify allergies, reaction history, any pre-medication taken prior to the exam and ensure documentation in the patients chart.
9. If a patient reports a previous allergic reaction and has not been pre-medicated, the patient will be instructed to follow up with their ordering provider to obtain a prescription for pre-medication. The patient will be provided with the contact number to rebook their exam and instructed to call once they obtain the prescription. Clerical will fax the requisition and recommended pre-medication back to the ordering provider.
10. If a patient reports missing a dose, a radiologist consult must occur before proceeding with the administration of contrast. The radiologist must write a communication order in the chart that provides direction to proceed with contrast if it is determined that it would be detrimental to delay and rebook the exam.
11. If the exam has been protocolled with iodinated oral contrast:
 - A. Proceed with oral contrast if the patient has been pre-medicated.
 - B. Consult with radiologist if the patient has not been pre-medicated.

EDUCATION:

Successful completion of appropriate Medical Imaging Contrast Learning package.

MRT's administering contrast and nurses working in medical imaging must read and sign off their understanding and agreement to follow the procedure outlined in this policy during modality orientation or following approved creation or revision.

QUALITY MONITORING:

Any staff member identifying potential or actual adverse outcomes resulting from implementation of the policy will follow the incident reporting process as per the organizations incident reporting system.

Applicable team lead(s) will review relevant literature bi-annually to ensure current safety and procedural standards are in place.

DOCUMENTATION AND OR COMMUNICATION:

Documentation outlined in the procedure of this policy must be included in the patients chart.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A: Pre-Medication Regimen for Contrast Allergy

REFERENCES:

American College of Radiology. (2024). ACR Manual on Contrast Media. American College of Radiology.

Yale School of Medicine. (2024, Sept 17). Pre-Medication Policy. Radiology & Biomedical Imaging. [Pre-Medication Policy < Radiology & Biomedical Imaging](#).

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Attachments

[Appendix A Pre-medication Regimen for Contrast Allergy](#)

Approval Signatures

Step Description	Approver	Date
VP Program	Brandon Douglas	06/2025
IPPC	Victoria Crowder-Bansen	05/2025
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Applicability

WRHN@Midtown & Chicopee, WRHN@Queen's Blvd

Topic Tags

IV contrast, allergy, gadolinium, gbca, intravenous contrast, iodinated contrast

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