TABLE 440e-2 GUIDELINES FOR PREMEDICATION OF PATIENTS WITH PRIOR CONTRAST ALLERGY

12 h prior to examination:

Prednisone, 50 mg PO *or* methylprednisolone, 32 mg PO

2 h prior to examination:

Prednisone, 50 mg PO *or* methylprednisolone, 32 mg PO *and* cimetidine, 300 mg PO *or* ranitidine, 150 mg PO

Immediately prior to examination:

Benadryl, 50 mg IV (alternatively, can be given PO 2 h prior to exam)

are related to allergic hypersensitivity (anaphylaxis) and range from mild hives to bronchospasm and death. The pathogenesis of allergic hypersensitivity reactions is thought to include the release of mediators such as histamine, antibody-antigen reactions, and complement activation. Severe allergic reactions occur in ~0.04% of patients receiving nonionic media, sixfold lower than with ionic media. Risk factors include a history of prior contrast reaction (fivefold increased likelihood), food and or drug allergies, and atopy (asthma and hay fever). The predictive value of specific allergies, such as those to shellfish, once thought important, actually is now recognized to be unreliable. Nonetheless, in patients with a history worrisome for potential allergic reaction, a noncontrast CT or MRI procedure should be considered as an alternative to contrast administration. If iodinated contrast is absolutely required, a nonionic agent should be used in conjunction with pretreatment with glucocorticoids and antihistamines (Table 440e-2); however, pretreatment does not guarantee safety. Patients with allergic reactions to iodinated contrast material do not usually react to gadolinium-based MR contrast material, although such reactions can occur. It would be wise to pretreat patients with a prior allergic history to MR contrast administration in a similar fashion. Nonimmediate (>1 h after injection) reactions are frequent and probably related to T cell–mediated immune reactions. These are typically urticarial but can occasionally be more severe. Drug provocation and skin testing may be required to determine the culprit agent involved as well as determine a safe alternative.

Other side effects of CT scanning are rare but include a sensation of warmth throughout the body and a metallic taste during intravenous administration of iodinated contrast media. Extravasation of contrast media, although rare, can be painful and lead to compartment syndrome. When this occurs, consultation with plastic surgery is indicated. Patients with significant cardiac disease may be at increased risk for contrast reactions, and in these patients, limits to the volume and osmolality of the contrast media should be considered. Patients who may undergo systemic radioactive iodine therapy for thyroid disease or cancer should not receive iodinated contrast media if possible, because this will decrease the uptake of the radioisotope into the tumor or thyroid (see the *American College of Radiology Manual on Contrast Media*, Version 9, 2013; *http://www.acr.org/~/media/ACR/Documents/PDF/QualitySafety/Resources/Contrast%20Manual/2013_Contrast_Media.pdf*).

MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING

TECHNIQUE

MRI is a complex interaction between hydrogen protons in biologic tissues, a static magnetic field (the magnet), and energy in the form of radiofrequency (Rf) waves of a specific frequency introduced by coils placed next to the body part of interest. Images are made by computerized processing of resonance information received from protons in the body. Field strength of the magnet is directly related to signal-to-noise ratio. While 1.5-T magnets have become the standard high-field MRI units, 3-T magnets are now widely available and have distinct advantages in the brain and musculoskeletal systems. Even higher field magnets (7-T) and positron emission tomography (PET) MR machines promise increased resolution and anatomic-functional information on a variety of disorders. Spatial localization is achieved by magnetic gradients surrounding the main magnet, which impart slight changes in magnetic field throughout the imaging volume. Rf pulses transiently excite the energy state of the hydrogen protons in the body. Rf is administered at a frequency specific for the field strength of the magnet. The subsequent return to equilibrium energy state (*relaxation*) of the hydrogen protons results in a release of Rf energy (the *echo*), which is detected by the coils that delivered the Rf pulses. Fourier analysis is used to transform the echo into the information used to form an MR image. The MR image thus consists of a map of the distribution of hydrogen protons, with signal intensity imparted by both density of hydrogen protons and differences in the relaxation times (see below) of hydrogen protons on different molecules. Although clinical MRI currently makes use of the ubiquitous hydrogen proton, research into sodium and carbon imaging and spectroscopy appears promising.

T1 and T2 Relaxation Times The rate of return to equilibrium of perturbed protons is called the *relaxation rate*. The relaxation rate varies among normal and pathologic tissues. The relaxation rate of a hydrogen proton in a tissue is influenced by local interactions with surrounding molecules and atomic neighbors. Two relaxation rates, T1 and T2, influence the signal intensity of the image. The T1 relaxation time is the time, measured in milliseconds, for 63% of the hydrogen protons to return to their normal equilibrium state, whereas the T2 relaxation is the time for 63% of the protons to become dephased owing to interactions among nearby protons. The intensity and image contrast of the signal within various tissues can be modulated by altering acquisition parameters such as the interval between Rf pulses (TR) and the time between the Rf pulse and the signal reception (TE). T1-weighted (T1W) images are produced by keeping the TR and TE relatively short, whereas using longer TR and TE times produces T2-weighted (T2W) images. Fat and subacute hemorrhage have relatively shorter T1 relaxation rates and thus higher signal intensity than brain on T1W images. Structures containing more water, such as CSF and edema, have long T1 and T2 relaxation rates, resulting in relatively lower signal intensity on T1W images and higher signal intensity on T2W images (Table 440e-3). Gray matter contains 10–15% more water than white matter, which accounts for much of the intrinsic contrast between the two on MRI (Fig. 440e-6*B*). T2W images are more sensitive than T1W images to edema, demyelination, infarction, and chronic hemorrhage, whereas T1W imaging is more sensitive to subacute hemorrhage and fat-containing structures.

Many different MR pulse sequences exist, and each can be obtained in various planes (Figs. 440e-2, 440e-3, and 440e-4). The selection of a proper protocol that will best answer a clinical question depends on an accurate clinical history and indication for the examination. Fluid-attenuated inversion recovery (FLAIR) is a useful pulse sequence that produces T2W images in which the normally high signal intensity of CSF is suppressed (Fig. 440e-6*B*). FLAIR images are more sensitive than standard spin echo images for any water-containing lesions or edema. Susceptibility-weighted imaging, such as gradient echo imaging, is very sensitive to magnetic susceptibility generated by blood, calcium, and air and routinely obtained in patients suspected of pathology that might result in microhemorrhages, such as amyloid, hemorrhagic metastases, and thrombotic states (Fig. 440e-5*C*). MR images can be generated in any plane without changing the patient's position. Each sequence, however, must be obtained separately and takes 1–10 min on average to complete. Three-dimensional volumetric imaging is also possible with MRI, resulting in a three-dimensional

TABLE 440e-3 SOME COMMON INTENSITIES ON T1- AND T2-WEIGHTED MRI SEQUENCES

			Signal Intensity			
Image	TR	TE	CSF	Fat	Brain	Edema
T1W	Short	Short	Low	High	Low	Low
T2W	Long	Long	High	Low	High	High
FLAIR (T2)	Long	Long	Low	Medium	High	High

Abbreviations: CSF, cerebrospinal fluid; FLAIR, fluid-attenuated inversion recovery; TE, interval between radiofrequency pulse and signal reception; TR, interval between radiofrequency pulses; T1W and T2W, T1- and T2-weighted.