

MRI FAQs

Q: What is MRI?

A: MRI is short for Magnetic Resonance Imaging. (If your doctor has sent you for an MRA [Magnetic Resonance Arthrogram], or [Magnetic Resonance Angiogram], you be having specialized studies examining joints or blood vessels respectively. MRI is an advanced technology that lets your doctor see internal organs, blood vessels, muscles, joints, tumors, areas of infection, and more – with unexcelled clarity without the use of x-rays, surgery, or pain. MRI is very safe; in fact, it makes use of natural forces and has no known harmful effects. It's important to know that MRI will not expose you to any harmful radiation.

Q: How does the MRI machine work?

A: Through the utilization of magnetic fields, and radio frequency waves, the part of your body being imaged gives off a signal. That signal is then measured and sent to a computer. This creates an image or picture of that body part which is much more diagnostic than can be obtained with most other methods.

Q: Why an MRI?

A: MRI can provide very early detection of many conditions, so treatment can be faster, more effective, and accurate. The excellent quality of the images can assist in determining if surgery is required, as well as the presence of an abnormality, its size, shape, location and what soft tissues are involved.

Q: How should I get ready for the exam?

A: There is no special preparation needed. You may eat, drink and take your medications as needed. However, there may be some circumstances in which you'll be given specific instructions to follow before the exam. These can be explained by your doctor or the MRI staff during you scheduling process.

Q: Are there any restrictions with the exam?

A: Yes. Because the MRI machine uses a strong magnetic field, anything magnetically attractive cannot enter the scan room, therefore, all patients will be screened appropriately to ensure their safety. Some of these items include:

- A pacemaker
- Aneurysm clips
- Stimulators (Tens-unit)
- Some Metal implants
- Certain Steel surgical staples or clips
- An implanted drug infusion device
- Metal injuries involving the eyes

Also, if you're pregnant, let the doctor know.

Other items that should not enter the scan room may include:

- Coins
- Jewelry
- Watches
- Keys
- Dentures or partial plates
- Hearing aids

Magnetic waves can also erase the code on bank cards and credit cards, so don't bring your credit or bank cards into the MRI examination room. A locker will be provided for you to keep all your personal belongings safe.

You may also be asked to change into hospital gowns or scrubs, depending on the type of exam being performed.

Q: May I bring someone to the exam with me?

A: Yes, as long as they are also considered safe by going through the same screening process as you.

Q: What's the exam actually like?

A: There are many different types of MRI exams. Depending upon what body part is being imaged, your position in the scanner will vary. The machine consists of a long circular tube that you will be entering

Although it's extremely noisy, an MRI exam is completely painless. You will be asked to wear a set of ear plugs to help muffle the noise. The only thing you must do is HOLD STILL. When the noise is happening, pictures are being taken.

If your doctor orders a study with "contrast," you will be injected "dye." This enhances abnormal tissue and allows the radiologist to diagnose your images with more accuracy. Typically, there are little or no side effects to receiving this dye, but you may feel a slight pinch when injected.

Q: How long does the scan take?

A: The exam can last from 30 minutes to about an hour.

Q: Will I feel any different after the exam?

A: No. There are no side effects and there are no restrictions of what you may or may not do following your exam. You should return to your normal daily routines.

Q: When and from whom will I get my results?

A: Your referring physician will receive a report usually within 24 hours, but always within 48 hours of your exam. Your physician may be able to access the images "on line" via the internet immediately after your exam. Unless

Unless otherwise instructed, you should make a follow up appointment with your referring physician to review your results.

Q: What happens if I can't lay still or want to get off the table?

A: Remaining still during your exam is the most important part. Your MRI staff will make every effort to make you as reasonably comfortable as they can before the start of the procedure. This helps in in order to acquire the most diagnostic images possible. To put it simply, the more you move, the longer it takes.

Q: Can you scan my whole body while I'm in there?

A: No. MRI is very specific and we can only scan the area that your doctor has ordered.

Q: Why does my whole body have to be in the scanner if you are only scanning my head?

A: Sometimes, depending on what part of the body we are looking at, your head may not be in the inside the machine. The strongest part of the scanner is the center of the machine and the best images are obtained from this location. So, whatever body part is being imaged will be in that center spot.

Q: Why do you want to know about metal implants in my head if I'm having my back scanned?

A: Some implants are magnetically attractive and are not safe to enter the scan room, so we need to know your medical history before beginning the exam. And because the magnetic field is so strong your entire body is subject to the effects of that magnetic field.

Q: Will the results of my scan be kept confidential?

A: Yes. All staff members have signed a legal document protecting your private information, and take great pride in adhering to that. In addition, anyone who breaches that confidentiality is subject to dismissal and/or legal action.

Q: How do I get an appointment?

A: Call 724-884-0754 for a direct line to our MRI Department. You will need however, a current order from your doctor, your insurance cards, authorization from your insurer if one is needed (all insurances vary), and a photo ID.

OUR FRIENDLY AND COURTEOUS STAFF CAN GET YOU SCHEDULED QUICKLY AND ANSWER OTHER QUESTIONS THAT YOU MAY HAVE.

CALL 724-884-0754

