



Having an MRI Examination (1 of 3)

Please read this information leaflet very carefully. If you are at all unsure about the procedure please telephone us on 01722 336262 ext 4282.

This information leaflet tells you about an MRI scan. It explains how the test is done the risks involved and what to expect.

What is an MRI examination?

MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) is the name given to a technique which builds up pictures of an internal cross-section of the part of the body under investigation. The large machine looks like a tunnel about four feet long, the area of the body that is under investigation will be positioned so that it is in the centre of the tunnel.

It uses a magnetic field and radio waves, together with an advanced computer system to build up a series of images, each one showing a thin slice of the area being examined.

These images are very detailed and can show both bone and soft tissues in the body, and can therefore give a great deal of information. By means of the computer, the slice can also be obtained in any direction. MRI images allow doctors to evaluate parts of the body and certain diseases that may not be assessed adequately with other imaging methods such as x-ray, ultrasound, or computed tomography (CT).

Are there any risks?

As far as is known at present, this is an extremely safe procedure. It does not involve the use of x-rays. You are placed in a very powerful magnetic field and consequently the Radiographers have certain safety guidelines that we must follow before allowing you into the scanning room. This includes a detailed safety questionnaire which should be completed in advance of your scan, and posted back to the department to allow time to investigate your suitability to have an MRI scan.

If you have had a history of metal fragments in your eyes, you will have to have an x-ray first to prove there are no bits left. If you have a pacemaker, metal heart valves or metallic clip on an artery at the base of your brain, then there is a risk that these may move during an MRI scan, and a different examination will need to be arranged instead.

Metal implants pins and plates that have been in for a long period of time should not create a problem, but if you have any of these it is important to mention it to the Radiographers when you arrive.

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If you need your information in another language or medium (audio, large print, etc) please contact Customer Care on 0800 374 208 or send an email to: customer care@salisbury.nhs.uk

You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

Please complete The Friends & Family Test to tell us about your experience at: www.salisbury.nhs.uk/FriendsFamily or download our App from the Apple App store or Google Play Store.

The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

Author: Charlotte Howes
Role: Lead Radiographer
Date written: June 2010
Next review due: October 2021
Version: 1.2
Code: PI0600

For female patients, if you are or might be pregnant, you must make sure the doctor referring you or a member of staff in the radiology department knows as soon as possible in advance. MRI scans may not be advisable in early pregnancy, unless there are special circumstances.

Is there any special preparation?

Unless you have been told otherwise, you may eat and drink normally before and after your scan.

It would be helpful if you could arrive for your appointment wearing clothes that do not have zips, poppers or other metal attachments.

What if I am pregnant?

Please telephone the department in advance of your appointment.

What do I do when I arrive in the department?

Please report to the CT/MRI department and use the self check in device on the wall when you arrive. Please then take a seat. A member of the team will collect you and check your details.

Upon collection

The radiographer will explain the procedure for your examination. If you are required to remove clothing you will be shown to a private cubicle. You will be asked to put on a surgical gown. You will be asked to remove ALL jewellery, cash, keys, credit cards, watches etc. This is because anything containing metal may interfere with the magnetic field of the MRI unit. Metal and electronic objects are not allowed into the examination room.

You should inform us if you have diabetes, asthma or any allergies.

Who will I see?

A radiographer who is highly trained to carry out MRI and other imaging procedures.

What happens during a MRI examination?

You will be taken into the scanning room and made comfortable lying on the couch. Straps and pillows may be used to help maintain the correct position and to hold you still during the exam. You may be given an injection of a contrast medium into a vein in your arm, this helps to produce more detailed imaging in certain examinations. The couch will be moved slowly to position the part of your body under investigation within the 'tunnel'.

The radiographers will be in the control room once you have been positioned correctly, but you will be able to talk to them via an intercom, and they will be watching you all the time. You will also be given a buzzer to squeeze if you need one of the radiographers. It is important to remain completely still whilst the scans are taking place.

During the scan you may be asked to hold your breath or not swallow while each image is being produced. The scanner gets very noisy and you will be given either headphones or ear plugs to protect your ears from some of the noise.

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Once the scanning is completed you may be asked to wait until it is checked that the images are of high enough quality for the radiologist to read.

Will it be uncomfortable?

Apart from any machine noise you will not be aware of anything happening. Most patients do not mind lying with their body within the tunnel although some do get worried as they find it claustrophobic

How long will the examination take?

The process of taking the images takes between 20-45 minutes depending on the area of the body being scanned. Unless you are delayed by having to wait, such as for an emergency patient, the total time in the department will be about 1 hour.

What happens afterwards?

You can drive home afterwards and return to work/school as normal.

Can I eat and drink afterwards?

Yes.

When will I get the results?

The images will be examined after your visit and a written report on the findings sent to your referring doctor. This is normally available in 7 days.

If you have a query about the examination

If you have any questions about the examination please ring the number below between 8.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday:

If you have a query about the examination

If you have any questions about the examination please ring the number below between 9.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday:

Clinical Radiology 01722 336262 extension 4282

If you need to cancel an MRI appointment on the day of the examination please ring 01722 336262 extension 4871