

MRI

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) is an advanced medical imaging technique that uses radio waves and a magnetic field to create cross-sectional images of the human body. The detailed images provide valuable diagnostic information and are extremely effective in evaluating a broad variety of medical conditions.

What to expect during an exam

Upon entering the exam room you will see the MRI scanner, a large circular magnet with a table extending from an opening in the center. A highly trained technologist will help you get situated on the table, explain the procedure and answer any questions you may have. The technologist will monitor the exam from a control room.

During the exam you will be able to communicate with the technologist using a two-way intercom. As the exam begins, the table will gently slide into the magnet's opening. At this point multiple MRI sequences will occur. During each sequence, a tapping noise will indicate the imaging process is in progress. The detail desired from the study and the area of the body to be imaged will determine the number of sequences required.

You must remain still during each MRI sequence. In some instances, patients may be given an intravenous injection to increase the contrast between different tissues.

Impact of a MRI

No radiation is used during the exam as an MRI relies on a magnetic field and radio frequency. An MRI exam is painless with no side effects.

Length and preparation for exam

Depending on how many images are required, an MRI exam generally takes 15 to 45 minutes. A detailed study could take longer.

Prior to your exam you will be required to complete a prescreening form to ensure magnetic safety.

Patients should dress in clothing free of metal zippers, snaps or buttons. You may be asked to change into a gown for the exam. As some patients have metal inside their bodies, please inform your ordering physician and/or MRI technologist if you have:

- A pacemaker, artificial heart valve or aneurysm clips
- Any type of metal plate, pin or metallic implant
- An Intrauterine device, such as Copper-7 IUD
- Any metal fragments in your body (from exposure to metal fragments on the job, or a previous gunshot wound.)
- Claustrophobia

If required, patients with any of the above will be rescheduled for an alternative diagnostic imaging exam. MRI exams are usually avoided in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy although there are no proven hazards.

Getting results

After your exam, a radiologist specializing in MRI will analyze and interpret the images and prepare a report. The report will be sent to your physician who will share the results with you. To request a copy of the written report, please contact your physician's office.

Important reminder

Please do not bring siblings or small children to your procedure