

# MRI scan

## Patient information sheet



### What is MRI?

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) is a safe imaging technique. MRI uses a strong magnetic field, radiofrequency waves and a computer that produce detailed images of many parts of the body such as:

- brain and spinal cord
- ligaments and tendons
- organs such as the kidneys and liver
- breasts
- blood vessels.

MRI scans do not use X-rays (radiation). The MRI scanner contains a large magnet with a tunnel through the middle, which stays open at both ends.

### How to prepare for an MRI scan

Before your MRI scan you will need to complete an MRI safety checklist. It is vital that you answer these questions to ensure your safety. Tell the MRI staff if you:

- have any implants (such as pacemaker, neurostimulator, cochlear implant or aneurysm coils)
- have had previous surgeries
- have metal fragments (such as metal in the eye, bullets or shrapnel)
- are pregnant.

You may need to fast for a few hours before your MRI scan, or you may need to take a blood test to check your kidney function.

You will need to:

- undress and change into a hospital gown
- remove all jewellery, eyeglasses, phone, watch, hairclips, hearing aids and dentures.

Some people find the MRI machine makes them feel uncomfortable due to the confined space. If claustrophobia (fear of enclosed spaces) is of concern to you, tell the MRI staff.

Some MRI examinations require a contrast injection. In this instance staff will insert a small intravenous line (cannula) into your hand or arm. The MRI staff will provide you with further patient information for a contrast examination.

## During the MRI scan

Once in the scanner room you will lie on the scanner bed. Sometimes extra apparatus gets placed over the part of the body scanned. The MRI staff will give you an emergency buzzer in case you need to call them during the scan. They also give you ear plugs or headphones to protect your ears from the noise of the machine.

Depending on the body part scanned, the MRI can take between 20 minutes to just over one hour. It is important that you keep still during the scan. While MRI staff are not in the room with you during the scan, they can see you and talk to you via an intercom.

During the MRI scan, the scanner bed moves into the tunnel running through the middle of the machine. The part of the body scanned is in the middle of the tunnel which stays open at both ends. In some procedures, the MRI staff ask you to hold your breath for a short period. This helps to capture the best images.

During the scan you may feel warm, let the MRI staff know if you become too hot.

## After the MRI scan

A radiologist will assess the images and send the results to your treating doctor. You should not experience any side effects or after-effects from having an MRI.

## Further information

Inside Radiology by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists:  
<https://www.insideradiology.com.au/mri/>

Radiology by the American College of Radiology and Radiology Society of North America:  
<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/mri>

MRI master:  
<https://mrimaster.com/index.7.html>