



THE MRI IMAGING EXPERIENCE

What to expect. . .

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NeuroScience Imaging Center

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Personal experience from some of our patients....

“...that was the fastest MRI I have ever had done....” “...being able to listen to the radio helped relax me...” “...the techs took their time and explained the procedure to me...they went the extra mile to make me comfortable...” “...the leg cushion, pillow and blanket made me feel like I could take a nap!” “...I was able to lay on my side for my MRI (lumbar) since I was in too much pain to lay on my back...” “...I was very nervous but the tech took her time to explain to me what was going to happen and the time it would take...she gave a buzzer to hold in case I needed her...”

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What to expect. . .

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) uses a powerful magnetic field, radio frequency pulses and a computer to produce detailed pictures of organs, soft tissues, bone and virtually all other internal body structures. The images can then be examined on a computer monitor, printed or copied to CD. MRI does **not** use ionizing radiation (x-rays).

How should I prepare for the procedure?

Guidelines about eating and drinking before an MRI exam vary with the specific exam and also with the facility. Some MRI examinations may require the patient to receive an injection of contrast into the bloodstream. However, the contrast material used for an MRI exam, called gadolinium, does not contain iodine and is less likely to cause side effects or an allergic reaction.

Women should always inform their physician or technologist if there is any possibility that they are pregnant. MRI has been used for scanning patients since the 1980's with no reports of any ill effects on pregnant women or their babies. However, because the baby will be in a strong magnetic field, pregnant women should not have this exam unless the potential benefit from the MRI is assumed to outweigh the potential risks.

Jewelry and other accessories should be left at home if possible, or removed prior to the MRI scan. Because they can interfere with the magnetic field of the MRI unit, metal and electronic objects are not allowed in the exam room. These items include:

- ◆ jewelry, watches, credit cards and hearing aids, all of which can be damaged.
- ◆ pins, hairpins, metal zippers and similar metallic items, which can distort MRI images.
- ◆ removable dental work.
- ◆ pens, pocketknives and eyeglasses.
- ◆ body piercings.

You should tell the technologist if you have medical or electronic devices in your body, because they may interfere with the exam or potentially pose a risk, depending on their nature and the strength of the MRI magnet. Examples include but are not limited to:

- ◆ artificial heart valves
- ◆ implanted drug infusion ports
- ◆ implanted electronic device, including a cardiac pacemaker
- ◆ artificial limbs or metallic joint prostheses
- ◆ implanted nerve stimulators
- ◆ metal pins, screws, plates, stents or surgical staples
- ◆ In general, metal objects used in orthopedic surgery pose no risk during MRI. However, a recently placed

artificial joint may require the use of another imaging procedure. If there is any question of their presence, an x-ray may be taken to detect the presence of and identify any metal objects.

How is the procedure performed?

You will be positioned on the moveable examination table. Small devices that contain coils capable of sending and receiving radio waves may be placed around or adjacent to the area of the body being studied. If a contrast material is used during the examination, it will be injected by the technologist into the intravenous line (IV) after an initial series of scans. Additional series of images will be taken during or following the injection. MRI exams generally include multiple runs (sequences), some of which may last several minutes. Duration of exam depends on the type of exam and the equipment used,

What will I experience during and after the procedure?

Most MRI exams are painless. Some patients, however, experience a sense of being closed-in (claustrophobia). It is important that you remain perfectly still while the images are being recorded, which is typically only a few seconds to a few minutes at a time. For some types of exams, you may be asked to hold your breath. You will know when images are being recorded because you will hear tapping or thumping sounds when the coils that generate the radiofrequency pulses are activated. You will be able to relax between imaging sequences, but will be asked to maintain your position as much as possible.

You will usually be alone in the exam room during the MRI procedure. However, the technologist will be able to see, hear and speak with you at all times using a two-way intercom. You may be offered or you may request earplugs to reduce the noise of the MRI scanner, which produces loud thumping and humming noises during imaging. MRI scanners are air-conditioned and well-lit. Some scanners have music to help you pass the time.

For further information please consult the ACR Manual on Contrast Media, Version 6, 2008, and its references. You may find it on the ACR Website (<http://www.acr.org/contrast-manual>).

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

A radiologist will analyze the images and send a signed report to your primary care or referring physician, who will share the results with you.

Source: <http://www.radiologyinfo.org>

