

# Information for patients having a **MRI Scan**



Please arrive early to give yourself time to check in. Please bring with you photo identification and your BC Care Card (personal health number).

Do not bring children under the age of 12 with you unless you bring someone to care for them while you are having the test.

**Our staff will speak with you in English. If you are not fluent in English, please bring an adult interpreter with you who is able to stay for the entire test.**

If you are not able to keep your appointment, please call the department right away. By giving us at least 24 hours notice we are able to use your time slot for another patient. We will try to give you another date and time for your test when you call.

Please do not wear perfume, cologne, or aftershave to your appointment. Some people are allergic to fragrance ingredients and can suffer severe reactions.

## **The Radiology department**

The Radiology department may also be called the x-ray, diagnostic or medical imaging department. It is the facility in the hospital where radiological examinations of patients are carried out, using a range of imaging equipment, such as a CT (computed tomography) scanner, an ultrasound machine and a MRI scanner.

Radiologists are doctors specially trained to interpret the images and carry out more complex examinations. They are supported by technologists who are highly trained to carry out the MRI scanning procedures.

## **What is an MRI**

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 contains an opening about 2 feet across and about four feet long, through which a patient lying on the attached MRI table can pass.

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 can show both bones and soft tissues in the body and can therefore give a great deal of information. By means of the computer, the 'slices' can be also be obtained in any direction.

Detailed MR images allow physicians to better 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 (also called CT or CAT scanning).

## Are there any risks?

As far as is known at present, this is a very safe procedure. It does not involve the use of x-rays. You are placed in a very powerful magnetic field, and consequently if you have any small pieces of metal inside your body, you should inform the MRI technologist as in some cases you may not be able to have the examination.

If you have had a history of metal fragments in your eyes, it is necessary to have an ordinary x-ray done to prove there are no bits left. If you have a pacemaker, metal heart valves or metallic clip on an artery in your brain, then there is a risk that these may move during an MR scan, and a different examination will need to be arranged instead. However, any shrapnel or metal sutures, such as stitches, that have been in place for a long time may not create a problem.

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. MR scans may not be advisable in early pregnancy, unless there are special circumstances.

## Are you required to make any special preparations?

Usually you don't need to make any special preparation for an MR scan. Unless you have been told otherwise, you may eat and drink normally before and after the scan. For abdominal and pelvic scans, you may be asked to drink a fairly large amount of fluid before the scan, to help identify your stomach and bowel.

## Can you bring a relative/friend?

Yes, but for reasons of safety they may not be able to accompany you in the scan room; only in very special circumstances.

## When you arrive

Please go to the reception desk in the part of the radiology department where MR scanning is carried out. You will be shown where to wait until an MRI technologist or other member of staff comes to get you.



## Before the MRI

You will be shown to a private change room where you may be asked to take off your outer garments and remove all jewellery, coins, cash, keys, credit cards, body piercings and watches etc. This is because anything containing metal may interfere with the magnetic field of the MRI unit. Pagers, cell phones, MP3 players and other electronic objects are not allowed into the examination room.

You may be asked to put on hospital clothing provided. You will be asked to place your clothes, jewellery, and personal belongings either in a bag provided by the hospital or in a secure locker.

## **What happens during the MRI?**

You will be taken into the special room and made comfortable lying on the MRI table. Sponges and pillows may be used to help you stay still and maintain your position during imaging. You may be given a contrast medium (a dye) which helps to produce a more detailed image. The contrast medium would be injected into a vein in your arm.

The MRI table will be moved slowly to position the part of your body under investigation within the machine. The technologist will be in the control room but you will be able to talk to them via a speaker phone, and they will be watching you all the time. It is important that you remain completely still while the images are being recorded. During the scan, you may well find the machine very noisy and you will be given earplugs and/or earphones. If you feel uncomfortable, tell the technologist right away.

## **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 scanner, but some find it uncomfortable in a confined space (claustrophobia). If this makes you feel worried, tell the technologist right away. However, if you suffer badly from claustrophobia, you should talk to your doctor as soon as possible ahead of your appointment. Your doctor may prescribe you a mild calming medicine to take prior to the MRI scan. If you take the medicine ordered by your doctor, you must not drive afterward.

## **How long will it take?**

The process of taking the images usually takes about 30–45 minutes and unless you are delayed by such as emergency patients, your total time in the department is likely to be about 60 minutes.

## **Are there any side-effects from the MRI scanning?**

No. You can drive home afterwards and return to work as necessary, unless you took a calming medication as ordered by your doctor.

## **Can you eat and drink afterwards?**

Yes, you can eat and drink as you normally would.

## **When will you get the results?**

After the scan, the images will be examined further by the radiologist, who will prepare a report on their findings. This may take some time to reach your referring doctor, but is normally less than 14 days.

## **Other sources of information**

### **Website**

[www.radiologyinfo.org](http://www.radiologyinfo.org)

## Hours of Operation:

Monday:

Tuesday:

Wednesday:

Thursday:

Friday:

Saturday:

Sunday:

## Contact Numbers:

**Patient's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Appointment Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Appointment Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

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