

What to Expect from an MRI Scan

WHAT IS AN MRI SCAN?

This examination, called an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) scan, uses magnetic and low energy radiowaves to produce a series of pictures of your head, spine, or other parts of your body. It does not use any x-rays, radioactive materials or any form of ionizing radiation. To the best of our knowledge, it produces no harmful side effects or unpleasant sensations. Depending on what information your doctor needs, the MRI scan may require the use of a drug given intravenously to assist in visualization of certain structures in your body. It will be administered by a technologist trained in its use.

PATIENT PREPARATION

No patient preparation is necessary to perform an MRI scan. The exam is not affected by anything you may have eaten or drunk or by any medication you may have taken. You will be asked to complete a safety screening form and answer questions pertaining to your medical history.

PRECAUTIONS

The presence of any metallic objects either on your person or clothing or in your body may interfere with the scan. Before the scan is done, you will be asked to remove all jewelry, watches, hairpins, glasses, wallets and the like, and change into a hospital gown. Important: If you have undergone surgery on your head or brain (or elsewhere in your body) for which internal metal clips may have been left in place, please tell the technologist about this before getting on the scanning table. Also, tell the technologist if you have a cardiac pacemaker or artificial metallic joint. These may make it impossible to do the scan.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING AN MRI SCAN?

After you have changed into a hospital gown and removed all metal objects, the technologist will position you on a special table. Your head will be placed in a padded plastic cradle or on a pillow, and the table will then slide into the scanner. It will seem as though you are being rolled into a long tunnel. You will be able to communicate with the technologist during the scan.

Outside the scanner tunnel surrounding your head and body, there is a large magnet with a radio transmitter and receiver. Information from these instruments is accumulated and fed into a computer. The computer then produces a series of pictures of your body which are helpful in identifying a wide range of disease states.

While the machine is taking your pictures, you will hear rapidly repeating, loud thumping noises coming from the walls of the scanner; therefore earplugs will be provided. Any movement,

especially of your head or back (even moving your jaw to talk) during this time will seriously blur the pictures. During the scanning, you should breathe quietly and normally but otherwise refrain from any movement, coughing or wiggling. When the thumping noise stops, the pictures will be processing and you may relax for a few minutes, but you must refrain from changing your position or moving about. This whole procedure will usually be repeated several times, and the entire exam ordinarily takes between 30 and 60 minutes to complete.

FINDING OUT THE RESULTS

The radiologist will study your examination and give his or her impression and report to your doctor. Then your doctor will discuss the results with you and explain what they mean in relation to your health. Results cannot be given directly to the patient or family.

The information on this Website is provided for general informational purposes only and **SHOULD NOT** be relied upon as a substitute for sound professional medical advice, evaluation or care from your physician or other qualified healthcare provider. If you have a medical problem or a health-related question, consult your physician or call Health On-Call at 336-716-2255 or 1-800-446-2255.

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