

Magnetic Resonance Imaging Test

If you have any questions about this test, please ask your physician or nurse.

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) is a test that uses magnets, radio waves and a computer to make pictures of the inside of your body. It does not use X-rays. During the test, you may get a contrast dye. This makes certain parts of your body look brighter in the pictures.

The time it takes for the test depends on area to be scanned and the information your physician needs. Most MRI tests last about 45 to 60 minutes. You need a physician's order for all MRI scans. To schedule an appointment at one of our locations, please call 312.926.9000 (TTY: 711).

Before the test

Please tell your physician if you might be pregnant, are trying to become pregnant or are breastfeeding.

Also, tell your physician if you have kidney disease or are being treated with dialysis. If you are being treated with dialysis, you will need to schedule dialysis on the day of your MRI test and again the next day. This will help your body get rid of any contrast dye used during the test.

The care team screens every patient who has an MRI test to make sure certain safeguards are in place. Please tell your physician or an MRI staff member before the test if you have any metal inside your body. This may include:

- Pacemaker
- Aneurysm clip
- Ear or eye implant
- Joint or bone rods, clips or implants
- Metal plate
- Bullets or shrapnel
- Neurostimulator
- Programmable shunt
- Hair extensions with metal clips

Please talk with your physician if you cannot lie flat for about 1 hour or if you are uncomfortable with closed-in spaces.

Before the test, the scheduling MRI staff will give you any special instructions you need to prepare for this test. Usually, there is no special preparation.

On the day of the test, plan to arrive 30 minutes before your test time. Also, be sure to bring:

- Your physician's written order for the test, if you received one
- A list of your allergies
- A list of all your current medications (prescription, over-the-counter and herbal)

- Your photo ID
- Medical insurance information
- Medicare card (Medicare patients only)

If you and your physician made plans for you to get any medication to help you relax, you also will need a responsible adult to take you home.

When you arrive, the staff will ask you to complete an MRI safety questionnaire and a medical history form.

Before the test, the staff will take you to a locker room to change into a hospital gown and store your belongings. It is important that you remove all metal objects and belongings, including:

- Jewelry
- Body piercings
- Hairpins
- Hearing aids
- Dentures
- Credit cards
- Keys

The staff nurse will review your completed forms with you. They may put an IV (into the vein) line in your arm or hand.

During the test

The staff will take you to the MRI testing room. The technologist (tech) who will be doing the test can answer any questions you may have.

The tech will help you lie on the imaging table attached to the MRI machine. They will position you comfortably and give you a hand-held device you can use to contact the tech during the test as needed.

The MRI machine will make a loud drumming noise during testing. The tech will give you earplugs to protect your hearing. If you need medication to help you relax, a nurse will inject it into the IV line at this time. They may also give you an IV contrast dye during the test. You may feel warm or flushed, or you might notice a metallic taste in your mouth as they inject the dye. This is normal. However, please tell the staff right away if you have shortness of breath, hives or itching.

They will line up your body and the machine to scan the right area of your body. Then, the table will move so you are in the center of the machine. The tech will stay in contact with you throughout the test. It is very important that you lie still and follow instructions. Between scans, the drumming noise will stop. They may ask you to hold your breath several times during the test.

When the test is over, the tech will help you off the imaging table.

After the test

If the clinician gave you medication to help you relax, you must stay in the department for about 1 hour. The nurse will check your blood pressure, heart rate and oxygen level. Unless told otherwise, you may go back your normal activities and diet after the test. If you received contrast dye, drinking extra fluids helps flush it out of your body. The contrast dye will not change the color of your urine.

Most often, your physician will get the initial MRI findings within 48 hours. A full report follows in about 5 business days.