

# What to Expect During Your MRI

## Your Physician Has Ordered an MRI

An MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) is an imaging machine that uses a large magnet, a computer and radio waves to look inside the body to evaluate various body parts.

A certified technologist will perform your MRI. A board-certified radiologist will interpret your images.

### Preparing for the procedure

When you schedule your MRI at 630.933.5000 (TTY for the hearing impaired 630.933.4833) the scheduler will ask you questions regarding any metal implants or metal fragments you may have in your body. Some implants can cause serious, and even fatal, complications when exposed to the strong magnetic field of the MRI. Please be prepared to give the scheduler the name, make and model number of anything surgically put into your body. Also, bring this information along the day of your MRI. We do not need specifics for hip or knee implants.

When scheduling your appointment please let the scheduler know if you have any severe drug allergies. Women should tell their doctors if there is any chance that they are pregnant.

Generally, no special preparation is required for your MRI. For MRI of the bile ducts, MRCP, please do not eat or drink six hours before exam.

Typically you will lie on your back for an MRI. If it is painful for you to lie on your back or in the same position for long periods of time, you may want to speak to your physician about taking something for the pain before your MRI. Also, if you are claustrophobic, speak to your physician prior to your appointment. A mild sedative may be prescribed to make you comfortable. If you do take a sedative, you will need someone to drive you home.

You may listen to music during your MRI. You may bring a CD or iPod. We want you to be as comfortable as possible for your examination. Please let us know any other way we can make this experience better for you prior to your examination.

### THE DAY OF YOUR MRI

**MEDICATIONS:** Generally, you may take your usual medications; if you have any questions contact the MRI department at 630.933.3182

**MAKEUP:** Some makeup, particularly mascara, is made with a metallic base; it is best not to wear any on the day of your appointment if you are having an MRI of your head or neck

**PAIN MEDICATION:** Take pain medication if needed

**SEDATION:** If taking an oral sedative for claustrophobia, contact the MRI department at 630.933.3182 to make sure they are running on time before you take your sedative

**PRIOR STUDIES:** If you have had prior imaging studies performed at another facility on the area where your MRI is being performed, please bring the report and images so these can be compared to your MRI

**IMPLANTS:** Please bring all information regarding anything surgically implanted in your body — name, make and model number (hip and knee implants are excluded)

Please arrive 20 minutes prior to your MRI appointment time. You will check in at the diagnostic imaging department on the first floor. You will be asked to fill out an MRI screening form. Many of the questions you were asked during the scheduling process will be asked again

**continued on back**



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Continued

on this questionnaire. This is for your safety. The MRI technologist also will go over this information with you prior to your MRI for the last safety check.

When the technologist prepares you for your MRI, you will need to remove all metal jewelry and watches. Dentures or partial dental plates will need to be removed for brain and neck exams. Many hair products or attachable hair weaves contain magnetic particles and they must be removed. You also should remove any hair clips, ties or pins that are made of metal or have metal parts on them. Hearing aids will be removed once the exam is explained to you. You will need to change into a hospital gown as well. All valuables will be locked in a locker.

Depending on the part of your body to be scanned, you may be given a contrast material (a special dye) called gadolinium through an intravenous (IV) line. If you meet certain criteria, for your safety you may need to have a blood test prior to having the contrast to make sure your kidneys are functioning normally.

The technologist will give you earplugs to help muffle the noises of the MRI scanner. He or she will give you a call button to be used if you need the technologist during the MRI. Typically, you will lie on your back for most exams. A “coil” will be positioned around the part of your body that will be studied.

The exam table will slide into the MRI machine. The body part being imaged will be in the center of the machine. You will need to lie still during the MRI. You will know the machine is taking images because you will hear loud tapping or knocking sounds. You also may feel the table vibrate. The part of your body that is being examined may feel warm during the MRI; this is normal. If it feels uncomfortable please inform your technologist. The MRI

exam can last 30 minutes up to two hours. Your MRI technologist can inform you how long to expect your test to take. If there is motion on any of the images repeats may need to be taken. This could add time to the exam.

## DEPENDING ON THE BODY PART BEING IMAGED, YOU WILL ENTER THE MRI AS FOLLOWS:

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HEAD FIRST: Brain/head, cervical spine, thoracic spine, lumbar spine (for lumbar spine, feet first at patient request; if this is combined with another part of the spine or head, patient will need to be head first), soft tissue neck, brachial plexus, shoulder, humerus, forearm

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HEAD FIRST ON STOMACH: Elbow (with arm stretched out above head)

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FEET FIRST ON STOMACH: Breast, forearm (depends on patient), wrist/hand/fingers (with arm stretched out over head)

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FEET FIRST: Hips, pelvis, femur, lower leg/tib fib, knee, ankle, feet/toes and abdomen

During the examination, the technologist will be in a nearby computer room. The technologist will be able to see you, and you will be able to communicate at all times through an intercom system. The technologist will let you know how long each sequence will take during your MRI.

## After the procedure

When the MRI is complete, you can expect to resume your normal activities immediately, including driving, unless you've taken a sedative. You will be given discharge instructions upon the completion of your exam. Your MRI will be read by a radiologist trained to read the images and a report will be sent to your physician.

