

Adults having an MRI scan

Introduction

An MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) scan has been booked for you. This leaflet gives you information about the MRI, the risks and what will happen during the scan.

What is an MRI?

MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) is a procedure which builds up pictures of the part of the body under investigation. This happens by using a magnetic field and radio waves, together with an advanced computer system. A series of images are built up, each one showing a thin slice of the area being examined. These images are very detailed and show both bones and soft tissues in the body giving us a great deal of information. Using the computer, the 'slices' can be looked at from any angle.

Are there any risks?

As far as we know, this is a very safe procedure. It does not involve the use of X-rays, but even so, MRI scans are not suitable for everyone. Radiographers have to be certain that you meet the safety standards before entering the MRI scan room. You will be sent a safety questionnaire to complete with your appointment letter. Please fill this in and bring it to your appointment with you. If you answer yes to any of the questions, apart from 'have you had an MRI Scan before?', please ring the number on your appointment letter to give us more details. There are no known risks of having an MRI scan if you meet the safety standards.

For female patients, MRI scans may not be advisable in early pregnancy, unless there are special circumstances.

If you are or might be pregnant, please make sure the doctor referring you or a member of staff in the Radiology Department knows as soon as possible before your MRI.

Do I need to make any special preparations?

Usually, you do not need to make any special preparations for an MRI scan. You can eat and drink normally before and after the scan, unless you are advised not to.

It is advisable to leave any valuables at home and to arrive as metal free as possible for example no jewellery other than your wedding ring, belts with metal buckles etc.

Can I bring a relative/friend?

Yes, but for reasons of safety, they will be asked to stay in the waiting room. Only in special circumstances, will they be allowed to go with you into the scanning room.

What happens when I arrive?

A member of staff will explain about the particular scan you are having. You will be shown to a private cubicle where you may be asked to take off your outer garments and remove any jewellery (except your wedding ring).

You will also be asked to remove any cash, keys, credit cards, belts and watches from your pockets.

You may be asked to put on a hospital gown but if you prefer, you can bring your own dressing gown. You should place your clothes and personal belongings in the locker provided.

Who will I see?

You will be cared for by a small team including a radiology assistant and a radiographer who will carry out the MRI scan.

What happens during the MRI?

You will be taken into the MRI scanning room and made comfortable on the couch; this involves lying flat. You will need to keep as still as possible so that we do not get any blurry images. You will be given an alarm buzzer to press if you need to communicate with us at all during your scan.

MRI requires the placement of a coil/camera which is a special piece of equipment that enables the scanner to receive information from you to build the images. This will be placed on or around the part of your body being scanned. For scans of the head or neck area, it may be placed around and/or over your face but there are openings to see through. It will not touch or hurt you. As it is fitted, you may hear a clicking sound which indicates it has been put in the correct position. If at any time you do not feel comfortable about the coil/camera placement, then please let the radiographers know before the scan

starts, or alert us by using the handheld patient alarm buzzer during the scan.

You **MUST** wear ear protection in the form of earplugs, these will be provided. Some examinations may allow you to have a headset with music.

You may be given a contrast medium (dye) which helps to produce a more detailed image and improves the accuracy of the scan. The contrast medium would be injected into a vein via a cannula (thin tube) inserted into your arm.

Will the scan be uncomfortable?

During the scan, the machine will make a loud series of noises and vibrate slightly. The scanner is open at both ends. Most patients do not mind lying still while inside the scanner but if this worries you, please contact the Imaging/Radiology Department as soon as possible before your appointment. You will find the telephone number at the top of your appointment letter.

How long will the scan take?

The process of taking the images usually takes about 10 to 45 minutes, unless you are delayed, for example, by emergency patients. Your total time in the department is likely to be about 60 minutes.

Are there side effects?

There are no side effects from an MRI. You can drive home afterwards and resume your normal activities.

Risks from the contrast medium (dye)

We will ask you some detailed questions before giving you contrast medium during your scan. Sometimes we advise you to have the contrast medium to make a diagnosis easier and to prevent you from needing to return for further images.

The contrast medium we use (Clariscan™ or Primovist). Side effects or reactions are uncommon, but can occur. The most common side effects of headache, nausea and dizziness occur in a small number of patients and will occur within minutes of the injection.

Less often, in approximately 1 in every 1000 patients, an itchy skin rash might appear a few minutes after the injection is given. This mild allergy usually settles down by itself within an hour or so.

Severe allergic (anaphylactic) reactions to the contrast medium have occurred but are extremely rare. Allergic reactions usually begin within several minutes of the injection being given, when a patient is most likely in the scanner or still in the radiology department or hospital.

You have the right to decline a contrast medium injection.

Medication given during the scan

Sometimes we will advise you to have a dose of Buscopan® which will help to prevent muscle spasm and movement during some body scans. We will check that it is safe for you to have this medication.

Buscopan® can give you a dry mouth and a faster heart

rate but this only lasts for about 20 minutes.

The risks with Buscopan® are **very low** but on **rare** occasions a red itchy eye can develop. If this happens, medical help may be needed, please contact your GP or NHS 111 stating that you have been given Buscopan®.

You can decline Buscopan® should you wish to do so.

Can I eat and drink afterwards?

Yes, do so as normal. Please drink plenty of fluids if you have been given the contrast medium as it will help to flush the dye through your kidneys.

When will I get the results?

After the scan, the images will be studied by the radiologist, who will then write a report and send it to your referring doctor. This process normally takes up to 4 weeks.

What shall I do if I have a question?

If you have any questions about having the MRI scan, please contact the MRI appointments officer on the number shown on your appointment letter. Calls should be made between 9:00am and 5:00pm, Monday to Friday.

If you hold a RESPECT form, Health Passport or require reasonable adjustments for your scan please let us know prior to your appointment, this will help us prepare in advance ensuring your appointment is as smooth as possible for you.

We understand that you may have further questions. Please use the space below to write these down until you speak with us.

Further information

We are pleased that we can offer state of the art technology for diagnosis, but radiology equipment needs constant updating and there is a charitable fund for this. If you would like to make a donation, please send a cheque to the address below. Cheques should be made payable to GHNHSFT.

Please send your donation to:

The Business Manager
Department of Radiology
Address as on your appointment letter

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Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.

Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation.

***Ask 3 Questions** is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial.

Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85



<https://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-case-studies/>



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