

1. What is an MRI exam?

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) is an imaging exam that uses a strong magnetic field to make images of internal organs and tissues.

2. How is MRI different from a CT Scan or X-ray?

Unlike X-rays or computed tomography (CT) exams, MRI does not use ionizing radiation. MRI machines instead use magnets and radio waves to make images of the human body.

3. What are the benefits of MRI?

MRI provides very detailed images of anatomy inside the human body and for many medical conditions is best suited to help with diagnosis and monitoring of treatment.

4. What are the risks of MRI?

There are no known risks to humans from being exposed to magnetic fields of the strength used in medical imaging today, so the MRI exam poses almost no risk to the average patient when appropriate safety guidelines are followed. The strong magnetic field used in MRI is not harmful in itself, but objects and medical devices that contain metal may malfunction or be a hazard during an MRI. You will be screened for these objects and devices ([MRI screening form](#)) to ensure your safety.

5. What are alternatives to MRI?

Depending on the reason for the MRI, other imaging tests may be acceptable alternatives to MRI.

6. Who interprets my MRI exam?

Doctors who specialize in imaging are called Radiologists and they will review and interpret your images. A report of this interpretation will be sent to your doctor, and you can access it on the patient portal.

7. Can I have an MRI if I'm pregnant?

The decision whether or not to scan a pregnant patient is made on a case-by-case basis. The benefit to performing the scan must outweigh the risk. The Radiologist, patient's physician, and you will make a shared informed decision on whether or not to proceed with MRI.

8. Can I have an MRI if I'm claustrophobic?

We make efforts to ensure patients are as comfortable as possible during an MRI exam. Our MRI scanners are open on both ends, well-lit, and there is a fan for air circulation. There is a two-way intercom for communication between you and the MRI technologist. Many of our scanners now have wider openings and are shorter in length making them feel more open, and our MRI scans are tailored to the reason for the MRI so that they are not longer than necessary. Some patients with claustrophobia may need to have oral medication for anxiety prescribed by their doctors to bring to the MRI exam. Even less frequently, patients may need intravenous sedation or rarely general anesthesia to undergo an MRI exam.

9. What should I bring with me to my MRI?

Please leave your valuables at home, including jewelry, to prevent it from being lost or stolen. They will need to be removed prior to entering the scan room.

10. What is the safety screening process for MRI?

Because of the strong magnetic field used for MRI, certain conditions may prevent you from having an MRI. When you arrive, the Radiology staff will screen you with the [MRI screening form](#) for things that may prevent you from having an MRI or will require the MRI exam to be modified for your particular condition.

11. What can I expect before my MRI scan?

- Take your daily medications as you normally would, unless instructed otherwise.
- Very few MRI exams require special dietary restrictions for an MRI, and for those exams, you will be notified of the requirements.
- Please arrive at least 30 minutes prior to your exam and check in with the receptionist.
- You will need to complete the [MRI screening form](#).
- To eliminate possible MR safety issues, you will be asked to change into a hospital gown.
- A locker will be supplied to secure your belongings.
- A technologist will verify your identification and the requested MRI exam.
- Your screening form will be reviewed by the MRI technologist, in consultation with the radiologist if indicated.
- If intravenous [MRI contrast agent](#) is needed, an IV catheter will be inserted in your arm by a nurse or MRI technologist.

12. What can I expect during my MRI scan?

- The duration of the MRI exam varies, but the average is 45 to 60 minutes per body part.
- You will be required to lie still during the actual MRI scanning. Depending on the body part that is being examined, you may be instructed to hold your breath for up to 20 seconds.
- The magnet is permanently open on both ends. It is well lit and there is a fan for patient comfort. There is also a two-way intercom system for communication between patient and technologist. The part of the body being scanned will be placed in the middle of the magnet.
- The MRI technologist will place a device called a surface coil over the body part being scanned. This device records the image information and improves the quality of the MRI scan.
- You will be provided with earplugs or head phones to minimize the noise during the procedure. During the actual imaging, you will hear a loud intermittent banging noise.
- The MRI technologist will also provide you with an alarm button to alert the technologist of any discomfort you may experience at any point during the MRI exam.
- Some MRI exams require an injection of intravenous [MRI contrast agent](#). Inform the technologist if you experience any discomfort during the injection.

13. What can I expect after my MRI scan?

- If an intravenous [MRI contrast agent](#) was used, your IV will be removed before you go home.
- An allergic reaction from gadolinium dye is rare, however, if you experience symptoms such as rash, hives, or shortness of breath, you should notify the MRI technologist immediately if you are still at the imaging facility or go to the nearest hospital if you have already left the imaging facility.
- In the event that sedation is needed, you will be sent home once awake and alert. If you receive sedation, someone must drive you home.