



# Magnetic Resonance Imaging MRI

## What Is MRI?

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) is an imaging test that uses a strong magnetic field and radio waves to create detailed images of a specific part of your body.

## Why do I need a MRI scan?

Your clinician has recommended that you have a MRI scan. This is so that we can obtain detailed information on the structure and function of the requested body part to enable the clinician to make a diagnosis.

## Can anyone have a MRI scan?

Patients with certain kinds of metallic implants, or any other metal in their body, may not be able to have the scan. This is because the scanner uses a very strong magnet, which attracts certain metals.

Please let us know before your appointment if you have:

- a pacemaker/ defibrillator or any other electronic heart implant,
- had any surgery to the brain, ears or spine,
- any artificial, electronic or metallic implants in your body,
- any previous history of small pieces/fragments of metal in your eye/ anywhere in your body, surgery or procedure within the last six weeks,
- if you wear a continuous glucose monitor,
- any problems with your kidneys or are on kidney dialysis,
- are you pregnant or breast feeding?

We try to avoid doing scans on pregnant women in the first three months (12 weeks) of pregnancy if not deemed clinically urgent. Please tell your doctor and the radiographer if you are or think you may be pregnant before the scan.

Please contact the department, before the scan, if you are breastfeeding.

## What happens on the day of your MRI appointment?

Please ensure you **read all the information** sent to you and **complete the MRI safety questionnaire**. **If you answer yes** to any of the MRI safety questions - **call the number provided**.

## Before the scan

Unless you are told otherwise, you can eat and drink as usual, although it is best to just have a light snack such as a sandwich before your appointment rather than a large meal. You can take any regular medicines that you need with a sip of water.

When you arrive the radiographer will complete the MRI safety questionnaire with you to ensure you are safe to proceed with the scan.

You will be shown to a cubicle where you will be asked to change into a hospital gown and remove all jewellery, cash, keys, credit cards, watches, etc. You should place your clothes and personal belongings in the secure locker provided. We will ask you to remove all jewellery and body piercings before the scan as the scanner uses a very strong magnet. We suggest that you leave all jewellery at home.

It is a good idea to go to the toilet before we bring you in for your scan so that you have an empty bladder during your procedure which will be more comfortable for you.



## The MRI Scan

The scanner is a large tube. You will be required to lie in it so that the body part being examined is in the centre of the tube.

You will be taken into the scan room and made as comfortable as possible, lying on the MRI scan table. A piece of equipment (called a coil) will be placed around the body part being examined to acquire the images.

During the scan, the scanner is very noisy, you will be given some ear plugs to protect your hearing and bring it down to a safe level but you will still hear it.

You will be given a buzzer so that you can alert the staff if you become anxious or unwell.

The MRI table will be moved slowly to position the body part being examined the middle of the tube. The staff will go to the control room but you will be able to talk to them via an intercom when the buzzer is pressed and they will be watching you all the time the scan is being done.

It is very important that you keep still during the scans otherwise the images we obtain will be blurred.

You may be given a contrast medium injection (Gadolinium) which helps to produce a more detailed image. This is a colourless fluid that we can inject into a vein in your arm and lets us see your heart and blood vessels more clearly. We will let you know before the scan if we need to use a contrast agent.

If so, we will place the needle in your arm before the scan begins. We will let you know when we are going to start injecting the contrast agent during the procedure. Occasionally it can cause a metallic taste in the mouth. A small number of people can also experience nausea (feeling sick) and vomiting immediately after it enters the body though this is rare side effect of the contrast. More serious side effects are extremely rare. Please read the contrast documentation enclosed with this letter for more information.

### **How long will it take?**

Please note the length of the scan can vary depending on the body part being examined. It will be between 15-90 minutes long. We advise that you plan to be in the imaging department for at least two hours.

### **What happens afterwards?**

Once the MRI radiographer is satisfied that the images show all the information required and that you have not suffered any reactions to the contrast agent (if given), you will be able to get dressed and go home.

You can eat and drink normally and the results will be sent to your referring clinician.

### **What are the risks and benefits of having a MRI?**

The benefit of MRI is that it is a painless way of looking at your specific body part without the use of X-rays or surgical intervention. Extensive research has been carried out into whether the magnetic fields and radio waves used during MRI scans could pose a risk to the human body. No evidence has been found to suggest there's a risk, which means MRI scans are one of the safest medical procedures available - providing that you have answered the MRI safety checklist correctly and have been vetted for any implants that would be unsafe. You may find MRI uncomfortable if you have [claustrophobia](#), but most people are able to manage it with support from the radiographers and MRI team.

### **What to do I do if I can't make my allocated appointment time?**

Please contact us as soon as possible. We can then offer this date to another patient and agree a new appointment date and time with you. You will find the appropriate telephone number on your appointment letter.

### **What about my appointment time?**

Please note that the time you are given is the time you should arrive and not the time of your scan. This is to give the staff time to go through your safety questionnaire and for you to change. This helps to minimise delays. If you arrive late, we may not be able to perform your scan and another appointment may have to be arranged.

### **Do you require an interpreter?**

Please let us know, before your appointment date, if you require an interpreter for this procedure. Unfortunately, we cannot use family or friends to perform this role.

## Further information

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have a query or concern about your MRI scan on **01727 897325** or **01442 287506** - Monday to Friday, between 8.30am and 4.30pm.

For further information regarding your visit to Watford General Hospital or the West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust please visit [www.westhertshospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.westhertshospitals.nhs.uk). If you have further concerns about any aspect of the service you have received in the department and feel unable to talk to the staff responsible for your care please call PALS on 01923 217198 or email: [westherts.pals@nhs.net](mailto:westherts.pals@nhs.net). PALS staff can listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and help sort out problems on your behalf.

If you need this leaflet in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01923 217198** or email **westherts.pals@nhs.net**

### Survey - Friends and Family Test

We welcome feedback about your care, this feedback is shared with all staff so we can improve patients' experience. Click this [link](#) or scan the QR code with your smartphone or type in: [bit.ly/4o3QVFJ](http://bit.ly/4o3QVFJ).



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