

# Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) Patient Information

## What is MRI?

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) is a noninvasive medical imaging test that produces pictures inside of the body. It uses a powerful magnet and radio waves. There are no x-rays involved.

## What can be seen?

Detailed images of the brain, spine, abdomen organs, pelvis, musculoskeletal system, and blood vessels can be obtained. Tumors, strokes, multiple sclerosis, herniated discs, ligament tears and plaques and blood vessels can be diagnosed using MRI. MRI does not replace other imaging exams, like X-ray and CT, it assists and complements them. MRI focuses on soft tissues in the body.

## What to expect during your MRI?

When you arrive at the hospital you will check in at the registration desk with your health card. When it is time for your exam, an MRI technologist will go through the MRI screening form with you. Your medical history and surgeries will be recorded. You will then be asked to change into a gown and remove everything from your body, especially metallic objects, diabetic sensors, medication pumps and jewelry and lock them up in a secure locker.

The technologist will ask you to lie on a cushioned table and after you are comfortably positioned for the exam, move you into the machine. While the images are taken, the machine makes loud noises like a drumbeat. These sounds are normal for the MRI machine to make when taking pictures. You will be given hearing protection. You must remain still for the exam without moving. The MRI technologist will help you through the MRI process every step of the way.

## Do I receive an injection?

Not everyone having MRI receives an injection. The technologist will inform you if you require this injection and inform you what to expect. The contrast is called gadolinium. It is only used for MRI. It is often used to see certain structures, organs, blood vessels. It is injected in a vein through an IV or injection. It may give you a taste in your mouth, but the sensations are minimal, and most people have none. These sensations last for a brief time and are completely normal.

## How long does the exam take?

The exam takes 30 to 90 minutes depending on the exam you are doing.

## How should I prepare for the exam?

MRI does not require any special preparations unless you are having an abdominal or pelvis MRI. If you are, please have no food or drink 5 hours before your exam. You may want to avoid drinking coffee or caffeinated beverages so that you can lie still during your exam. If you are afraid of confined spaces (claustrophobia), please inform your doctor so they can prescribe you some medication. Please bring this medication (mild sedative) with you to your MRI appointment. If taking sedation, please arrange an escort to drive you home.