

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)

What is an MRI?

A Magnetic Resonance Image (MRI) is a painless, non-invasive technique that allows your doctor to see the soft tissues and organs in your body. The machine has a round opening that you lay in as it uses radio waves and magnets to scan your body. The digital information is transferred to a computer to create clear pictures of the scanned area without the use of radiation.

Why is it done?

An MRI is done for a host of different reasons; it serves as a non-invasive way for your doctor to examine the organs and tissues in your body to help diagnose a potential problem. An MRI helps with the diagnoses of many conditions such as stroke, aneurysm, breast cancer, spinal tumors, joint issues and many others.

Patient preparation

You should eat and drink as you normally would before your MRI, unless otherwise directed. Before the MRI, you will be asked to change into a gown and remove any jewelry, hair pins, glasses, dentures, wigs, underwire bra, or hearing aids. You will also be asked if you could be pregnant, have had any surgeries, have a pacemaker or other metal devices within your body, have tattoos, use nicotine or hormone patches, and if you have had an MRI exam before. If you have a pacemaker, you will not be allowed to have an MRI.

What to expect

Having an MRI is a painless process. You will lie on a moving table that slides you into the round MRI machine, which has openings on each end. During the MRI, the magnet in the machine makes loud tapping and thumping noises while completing the imaging process. The process is called a sequence. It is important to hold very still during your test for the best image quality. Your technologist will let you know when you are in between imaging sequences in case you want to adjust your position. You will be able to speak to your technologist at any time during your test. If you are claustrophobic, please let your health care provider and the technologist know before your test. Depending on the test your provider orders, the MRI could take from 20 to 45 minutes. After your MRI, you can resume your normal activities.

Results

After your MRI, a radiologist will analyze your scans and forward the results to your health care provider. Your provider will then discuss the results with you along with next steps.