



Royal Cornwall Hospitals
NHS Trust

MRI

Magnetic resonance imaging



One + all | we care

What is magnetic resonance imaging?

MRI is a way of taking images (pictures) of the inside of your body, without using X-rays. It uses a large, powerful magnet, radiowaves and an advanced computer to obtain images of any part of your body. The images allow your doctor to gain a better understanding of the internal workings of your body, and may help diagnose the cause of your symptoms.

What are the benefits of MRI?

Unlike CT scans or X-rays, MRI doesn't use radiation to obtain images, so it is a very safe form of imaging. Any part of the body can be scanned and imaged in detail. MRI is very good at showing up and distinguishing between soft tissues, providing detailed images of the areas scanned.

Are there any alternatives?

There are several other types of imaging such as CT scans, ultrasound or X-rays, which can provide different information; the type of scan advised will depend on what your doctor is looking for. CT scans and X-rays use radiation to make images.

What will happen if I don't have it?

Your doctor may be unable to diagnose the cause of your symptoms.

Is it suitable for everyone?

Sometimes an MRI scan is not appropriate due to the strong magnetic field.

Please let us know as soon as possible if you:

- have a pacemaker
- have ever had a pacemaker
- have an implanted electronic device
- have ever had an implanted electronic device
- have had operations on your brain or heart
- have sustained any injuries to your eyes involving metal fragments
- are pregnant
- think you may be pregnant.

Tel: 01872 252456 or 252907

Email: rch-tr.ClinicalImaging@nhs.net

Please note, these telephone numbers are NOT for appointment enquiries.

How do I prepare for my scan?

Unless you are specifically instructed, there is no special preparation needed. You can eat and drink normally. You will be asked to complete an MRI safety checklist before your appointment. It is very important you complete this as accurately as possible otherwise we may be unable to carry out your scan.

Try to wear clothing with minimal metal fastenings. You may be asked to remove all jewellery and empty your pockets.

What happens during the scan?

The scanner is a large, hollow cylinder, open at both ends. You will be positioned in the scanner so that the part of your body being scanned is in the centre. This means you may enter the scanner either head or feet first, and other parts of your body may stay outside the scanner.

While you are in the scanner, the radiographer will be able to talk to you through the intercom.

The scanner will make a lot of loud knocking noises while it is scanning you, so we will give you headphones or earplugs to wear. We can play you music during the scan if you would like to bring along your favourite CD.

In order to get more information from the scan images you may be given an injection of MRI contrast (colourless dye that shows up on the scans). There is a small chance that you may have an allergic reaction to the dye. Please let us know if you have ever had an allergic reaction to MRI dye.

How long will it take?

An average scan takes 20-40 minutes, although some may take up to 60 minutes.

Please note that occasionally there may be unavoidable delays to scheduled appointment times. We will always try to keep any delays to a minimum.

Will I have any pain or discomfort?

The test is not painful; you cannot feel it.

Are there any risks?

MRI is a safe examination with no known risks, provided that you fully complete the safety checklist. If you require MRI contrast (colourless dye that shows up on the scans), there is a very small risk that you may have an allergic reaction to the dye.

What shall I wear?

Please try to wear loose fitting clothes without any metal, such as a track suit.

What happens afterwards?

The scan will have no effect on you, so you may leave the MRI centre as soon as you are ready.

When will I get my results?

A radiologist will look at your images and write a report which will be sent to your GP, or the consultant who referred you for the scan. You should hear within 1-4 weeks when they want to see you next, unless a follow-up appointment has already been made.

How do I find the MRI department?

Please be aware that there are three MRI departments at Treliske and one at Bodmin. Your appointment could be at any one of these. Please check the details carefully in your appointment letter, it will give you clear instructions where to go for your scan.

What if I can't attend?

If you are unable to attend your appointment or no longer need your scan, please tell us as soon as possible as our waiting lists can be long and wasted appointments are costly. Please phone the number below.

About your consent

Before we carry out any examination or treatment we will need your permission - this is known as consent. Before the examination starts we will explain what is involved and what we hope to gain from it.

We will then ask for your consent to continue. For some procedures it may be necessary to sign a consent form, if this is the case we will discuss it with you.

If you change your mind about having the examination or treatment, you can withdraw your consent at any time no matter how you gave it. Everything discussed between you and the member of staff will remain confidential.

If you would like further information about consent or confidentiality, please read our information leaflet outlining consent.

Any questions?

If you wish to change your appointment or have any queries about your appointment please do not hesitate to contact the booking team:

Tel: 01872 252290

Email: rch-tr.ClinicalImaging@nhs.net

If you have any questions regarding your scan and you wish to speak to an MRI radiographer please contact the scanning unit:

Tel: 01872 252456 or 252907

Email: rch-tr.ClinicalImaging@nhs.net

If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690

