NHS
Royal Devon
University Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

MRI scan

(Magnetic resonance imaging)

(Eastern services)

Other formats

If you need this leaflet in another format such as Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service:

- 01392 402093 (for Mid Devon, East Devon and Exeter services)
- 01271 314090 (for North Devon services)
- rduh.pals@nhs.net

Introduction

This leaflet tells you about having an MRI scan. It explains what is involved and what the possible risks are.

What is MRI?

MRI stands for magnetic resonance imaging. It is a way to look inside the body without using X-rays. MRI can produce two- or three-dimensional images of what is going on inside a patient's body. This information may help your doctor with diagnosis and planning of any treatment.

It uses:

- A large magnet (large enough to surround the patient, but is open at both ends)
- Radio waves
- A computer

Who will be present for the scan?

Radiographers and radiographic assistants will be present in the room to prepare you for the scan; they will introduce themselves at the start of the scan.

A radiographer who is highly trained will perform your scan and it will then be interpreted by a specially trained doctor called a radiologist.

Occasionally student radiographers may be present to observe the scan.

Is there any preparation needed before my scan?

At home:

- Just relax and go about your normal routine
- Follow any instructions about eating or taking your usual prescribed medication
- If you have had an operation in the past six weeks, please contact us on 01392 402336, selecting option one, option five as soon as possible.
- Some implants are contraindicated for MRI. Please contact the department if you have a pacemaker, or any cardiac (heart) implant or repair, a gastric band, a cerebral aneurysm clip in place following brain surgery, an inner-ear implant, or a muscular or neuro stimulator implant.
- If you have any of the above, or have history of metallic foreign body in the eye, please contact the department for further instructions prior to your appointment. Failure to do this may mean that we have to postpone your scan.
- Bring something to read or do while you wait for your scan
- Leave credit or bank cards at home as they may be affected if accidentally taken into the scan room.

Cancelling your appointment

If you are unable to attend your appointment, we would be grateful if you could contact us on 01392 402336, selecting option one, option five as soon as possible. We can then offer your original appointment to another patient.

A further date and time will then be arranged for you. Please be advised that if you fail to attend your appointment, it may be necessary to remove you from the medical imaging waiting list.

Please note: If you have had D&V (diarrhoea and vomiting), you will need to contact us to rebook your appointment unless you have been clear for the past 48 hours.

At the scanning site:

You will be asked to complete a safety checklist about your medical history, especially whether you have a pacemaker or any metallic objects or implants inside your body.

You will be asked to remove any metallic objects, such as jewellery, body piercing, hairpins, glasses, wig or hair extensions (if it has metal clips), hearing aids, and non-permanent dentures.

You may be asked to change into a hospital gown.

What happens during the scan?

The equipment may look intimidating, but there is no need to be frightened. It is important to stay still and relaxed. The radiographer can address any questions or concerns that you may have.

You will then be taken into the room and positioned comfortably in the scanner, normally with your arms by your side. You will be asked to keep still during the scan. The area to be scanned will be positioned within the machine.

Your whole body may be in the machine, but you will not be totally enclosed and will be able to communicate with the radiographer either through an intercom or alarm bell. The scan will then be taken.

You will hear loud banging noises during the scan and will be given headphones for ear protection to minimise this. For some examinations we can play the radio or a CD if you wish to bring one, through the headphones.

The scan may require an injection into a vein in your arm of a contrast dye or substance that improves the picture of certain tissues or blood vessels. This may be done at the beginning or during the scan and the radiographer will talk you through this.

The radiographer will leave the room during the scan but will be able to talk to you through an intercom.

Will it hurt?

An MRI scan is a painless procedure.

How long will it take?

The length of the examination will vary depending on which area is being looked at. Total scan time usually ranges from 20 to 60 minutes. There will be several short scans and you will have communication with the radiographer during the scan.

You can expect to be in the medical imaging department for up to 90 minutes. Many examinations are completed sooner than this though.

What happens after the scan?

You should feel well enough to go home or back to work after the examination. A radiologist will report on the scan images. The report will be sent to your referring clinician/GP.

Are there any risks or complications?

If you are pregnant you should contact the department for further instructions before your appointment. Be sure to tell your GP if you think there is a chance you may be pregnant.

The contrast injection used in MRI scans contains gadolinium which has magnetic properties which help to enhance the scan. Prior to IV contrast being given, you will be asked if you have any known allergies or kidney problems. If you are breast feeding, please inform the radiographer prior to the contrast.

For some examinations you may be given an injection of Buscopan to reduce bowel movement. This may rarely trigger acute glaucoma if the condition is undiagnosed. If you develop a painful eye, you should attend the emergency department immediately.

Finally

If you find reading this leaflet difficult or your do not understand what it means for you, please call 01392 402336, selecting option one, then option five, and we can talk it through. Alternatively, you can email us rduh.radiologyappointments@nhs.net

More information and how to get here

For more information on the department and how to get to the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital at Wonford please refer to the “Welcome to the Medical Imaging Department” leaflet found on the Medical Imaging Department webpage below or use the Trust’s website for the latest information.

For more information on the Medical Imaging Department, please visit our website: **https://www.royaldevon.nhs.uk/services/radiology-x-ray-and-medical-imaging/**

Your notes

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern, please contact PALS:

- 01392 402093 (for Mid Devon, East Devon and Exeter services)
- 01271 314090 (for North Devon services)
- rduh.pals@nhs.net

Have your say

Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

You can also share your feedback on the Care Opinion website at www.careopinion.org.uk or freephone 0800 122 3135.

Scan the QR code to visit the Care Opinion website →

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