

# About your MRI Scan under General Anaesthetic

## (Morning Appointments)

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### What is an MRI Scan?

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 the patient's body. For good quality pictures the person must lie absolutely still, so some people need to be 'put to sleep' with a general anaesthetic

### It uses:

- A large magnet (large enough to surround the patient)
- Radio waves
- A computer

### Reasons for having an MRI scan

These will be discussed with you by the doctor who requests your MRI scan.

### Additional investigations under the same general anaesthetic

If anything else, such as a blood test, needs to be done, the doctor will discuss this with you.

### Information about the diagnosis

This will be discussed with you by your consultant.

### What does the procedure involve?

The procedure will involve you keeping completely still inside the scanner (this is why a general anaesthetic is given) while pictures are taken. An injection may be given into a vein to make some parts of the body show up better.

### What happens before the scan?

You should not eat after midnight on the night before the MRI scan. Please drink clear, non-fizzy drinks (e.g. water or squash, **but NOT milk**) until you arrive at the hospital on the day of the scan. You will be admitted to a ward on the day of the scan, this is detailed in your appointment letter. If you are taking any medicines or inhalers, you should take these as usual on the day of the scan.

We expect you to make a rapid recovery after your MRI scan under general anaesthetic and to experience no serious problems. However, it is important that you should know about minor problems, which are common after this procedure, and also about more serious problems that can occasionally occur. The section '*The risks of a general anaesthetic*' describe these, and

we would particularly ask you to read this. The headings from this section will also be included in the consent form you will be asked to sign before your MRI.

## What is a general anaesthetic?

A general anaesthetic ensures that you are unconscious and free of pain during an investigation or operation.

Anaesthetists are specialist doctors who are responsible for your wellbeing throughout the procedure.

## The risks of a general anaesthetic

General anaesthetics are usually very safe. However, there are some risks, which may be increased if you have a chronic medical condition. In general the risks are as follows:

- **Common temporary side-effects** (risk between 1 in 10 and 1 in 100) include bruising or pain in the area of injections, blurred vision and sickness. These can usually be treated and pass off quickly.
- **Infrequent complications** (risk between 1 in 100 and 1 in 10,000) include temporary breathing difficulties, muscle pains, headaches, damage to teeth, lip or tongue, sore throat and temporary problems speaking.
- **Extremely rare and serious complications** (risk less than 1 in 10,000). These include severe allergic reactions and death, brain damage, kidney and liver failure, lung damage, permanent nerve or blood vessel damage, eye injury, deep vein thrombosis and damage to the voice-box. These are very rare and may depend on whether you have other serious medical conditions.

## How long does a scan take?

Total scanning time is approximately 1 hour.

You are advised to leave all jewellery and valuables at home.

## What happens after the scan?

You should recover quickly, and should not experience any pain or discomfort. You will be able to drink and eat very soon afterwards.

## Discharge from hospital?

You will be able to go home a few hours after the MRI scan, on the same day, as long as you can drink and are not being sick.

## What should you do if a problem develops?

If you have any concerns before you go home, please talk to the nurse looking after you.

## Do you need to return to hospital for a check and what will happen to the results?

No you do not need to return to the hospital for a check but you will be seen in the Outpatient Department to discuss the results of the scan.

## Who should you contact in an emergency?

Please contact your GP, out of hours or 999 if severe.

## Contact us

If you found reading your leaflet difficult, you do not understand what it means for you, if you have any queries or concerns you can contact us on: 01392 402336 and we can talk it through or alternatively you can email us - [rduh.radiologyappointments@nhs.net](mailto:rduh.radiologyappointments@nhs.net)

## How to get to your appointment

Please refer to the enclosed "Welcome to the Medical Imaging Department" leaflet or use the Trusts website for the latest information:

[www.royaldevon.nhs.uk/our-sites/royal-devon-and-exeter-hospital-wonford/](http://www.royaldevon.nhs.uk/our-sites/royal-devon-and-exeter-hospital-wonford/)

For more information on the Medical Imaging Department, please visit our website:  
[www.royaldevon.nhs.uk/services/medical-imaging-radiology-x-ray/medical-imaging-eastern-services/](http://www.royaldevon.nhs.uk/services/medical-imaging-radiology-x-ray/medical-imaging-eastern-services/)

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