



University Hospitals Birmingham
NHS Foundation Trust



What is an MRI scan?

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What is an MRI scan?

MRI stands for magnetic resonance imaging. This is a scanner which uses a powerful magnet and radio waves to take detailed images of your body. The images will be examined by a specialist doctor (radiologist) in order to diagnose any problems.



What do I need to do before the test?

1. Please carefully check your appointment date, time and location.
The MRI service works 7 days a week, including evenings. Please note that we have MRI scanners at the main QEHB site and an MRI scanner at the ITM unit (located next to the Heritage Building)
2. Due to the strong magnetic field, it is not safe for some people to have an MRI scan

Contact MRI on 0121 371 2365 or 371 4694 if you:

- Are, or could be, pregnant. We consider on a case-by-case basis, with your doctor, what type of scan is appropriate and at what stage
- Are breastfeeding
- Have any electronic device in or attached to your body, e.g. pacemaker, implanted defibrillator, neuro-electrical stimulator, cochlear implant
- Have a programmable VP shunt. This is a tube draining fluid from your head to your abdomen, which can have its settings adjusted without an operation

Contact us on the above numbers if any of the following apply to you and you have not had an MRI scan in this hospital since:

- You have previously had an accident where metal fragments have entered your eyes or body, may need an x-ray prior to your scan
- You have surgical clips in your head from an open operation
- You have had surgery or a procedure in the last 8 weeks, where anything was inserted or implanted into your body. This includes stents, pill (or capsule) cameras, endoscopy with treatment, clips on blood vessels or ducts and contraceptive coils. If you are unsure whether your procedure included any implant, please contact MRI
- You have had a recent tattoo which is not fully healed
- You have had surgery or a procedure to implant anything into your body more than 20 years ago or in another country at any time

Failure to contact us regarding the above may result in your scan being cancelled or postponed on arrival.

3. Please carefully follow any additional instructions that we have given you. Unless they state otherwise, you may eat, drink and take medication as normal

4. We need to be able to talk with you. If you cannot speak English and require a translator, please call us. If you cannot answer questions for any other reason, a next-of-kin who knows your history must accompany you. If this is not possible please contact MRI

5. All patients undergoing any consultation, examination or procedure are entitled to have a chaperone present if requested

Can I bring a relative or friend?

Yes, but our waiting area is small so please limit the number of people accompanying you. Please only bring a relative, friend or carer if essential. Anyone else will need to wait outside of the clinical area until your scan is complete. If you bring a child of less than 16 years old, you **MUST** bring another adult (over 18) to supervise them, otherwise your scan will be postponed.

What should I wear?

Please attend your scan wearing clothes with as little metal as possible. T-shirts, leggings and tracksuit bottoms are ideal. Please avoid clothes containing metal fibres, usually found in some sportswear and underwear. Where possible, we scan you in your own clothes but sometimes it is more appropriate for you to change into a hospital gown. Changing facilities are provided. It is helpful if you wear loose-fitting sleeves, as some scans require an injection.

If you are wearing a medicinal skin patch or a silver wound dressing, please bring a spare as you could be asked to remove them.

If you wear a **glucose monitoring** system such as the 'Libre', this will need to be removed prior to the scan.

All metal jewellery, bangles, piercings and hair accessories (including clipped extensions) must be removed. If you cannot remove your jewellery yourself, please have it removed before attending for your scan.

Failure to remove certain items may lead to your scan being postponed. You may usually keep a plain metal finger band in place.

Heavy eye makeup can affect head scans so please remove or only use sparingly.

Please leave valuables at home. A small locker is available for essential items such as keys, watches and wallets.

What happens when I arrive?

You will be greeted by reception staff at the front desk and then directed to the MRI waiting area. You will need to complete a safety questionnaire before undergoing the scan.

Please allow two hours in the hospital for your scan, however occasionally it can take longer than this. The examination time on the table varies, but will be a minimum of 15 minutes. Typically it will take around 30–40 minutes but could be up to 90 minutes, or sometimes longer. We do our best to run on time but your scan may be delayed for emergencies.

What happens during the scan?

A radiographer will explain what will happen, answer any questions and perform your scan. The machine is shaped like a short tunnel but is well lit, open at both ends and there is a gentle breeze. You will lie on the scan table and sensor pads will be loosely placed around the area to be scanned. The table is moved into position. We understand that some people are anxious about going into the scanner. Please be reassured that the majority of patients find it much easier than they expect. However, if you find enclosed spaces particularly difficult (e.g. using lifts), please contact MRI for advice before your appointment.

During the scan, the radiographer will be able to see you from the control room through a window and will be in communication via an intercom. You will be given a buzzer so that you can get the radiographer's attention at any time. The machine makes repetitive loud knocking noises as the diagnostic images are being taken. You will be given ear plugs and sometimes headphones to reduce the volume. We may be able to play music for some scans.

It is important to keep very still during the scan. We have pads and cushions we can use to support you. For some scans we will ask you to hold your breath for a short time. Please tell the radiographer if you think this will be difficult for you.

Sometimes we give injections to increase the information that can be gained from the scan. If this is required, a thin plastic tube (cannula) is inserted into a vein in your arm, either before or during your scan. If you need an injection, the radiographer will ask some questions about your medical history beforehand. You will be able to continue your normal activities afterwards.

For further information please visit the UHB trusts website to view our video of an MRI scan being performed.

<https://archive.uhb.nhs.uk/video-having-your-mri-scan-at-qehb.htm>

or scan



What happens afterwards?

You will usually be able to leave straight after your scan. There is no reason that you cannot drive home and resume normal activities, unless we inform you otherwise prior to the scan. You may eat and drink normally.

Are there any risks?

MRI does not use X-rays. Provided the correct safety checks have been made beforehand, there are no known risks or side-effects associated with MRI scans.

You may have a contrast dye injected to increase the amount of information obtained from the scan. You are unlikely to feel any effect from the dye. Allergic reactions are possible but very rare. Careful, individual, consideration is taken over giving contrast to patients with pre-existing kidney failure as there are possible, but extremely rare, complications.

Sometimes a drug called Buscopan is injected to improve the image quality on abdominal scans. If this is needed for your scan, the radiographer will discuss it with you on arrival. This drug can cause blurred vision but the effects are not long lasting. We would advise that you do not commence driving until your vision returns to normal.

Very occasionally injections can leak outside the vein and cause temporary pain and local swelling. We will advise you what to do if this occurs.

How will I get the results?

The imaging department will not be able to give you the results of your scan. You will receive them from the doctor who referred you.

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email **interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk**.

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