

# What is a MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) Scan?

*"Lift your legs up. Put a pillow underneath to keep them comfortable."*

Magnetic resonance imaging, or MRI, is a test that uses powerful magnets, radio waves, and a computer to take detailed pictures inside your body.

*"It's most commonly used in the joints and in the brain and the spine. We use it in the brain and the spine to look for stroke, sometimes for tumors. And then for degenerative disease that can cause back pain."*-Dr. Aaron Hattaway, MD, Radiologist

Because an MRI machine uses very strong magnets, having any metal on or inside your body could be dangerous. So, before the test, tell your provider or the technician if you have an artificial joint or heart valves, a pacemaker or implantable defibrillator, metal clips, an eye or ear implant or tattoos that might contain metal. Also let your provider know if you've recently had surgery or any serious health problems, if you might be pregnant or if you're claustrophobic - that is, fearful of enclosed spaces.

*"The MRI is an enclosed space. If you have a fear of enclosed spaces, you can ask your doctor to recommend a sedative for you. You take that a half an hour before the exam to help relax you and get you through the procedure."*-Gregory Capulto, MRI Technologist

Before the test, remove any jewelry, electronics or anything else that might contain metal. For some MRI scans, you'll first get an injection of contrast dye.

*"If there is something in your body that we want to get a better look at and separate it from the surrounding tissue, so we can differentiate it from the surrounding tissues, IV contrast is very helpful for that."*- Dr. Aaron Hattaway, MD, Radiologist

During the test, you'll lie on a table that slides into a long, narrow tube. You'll need to hold very still during the test, so you don't blur the images.

*"The MRI is very safe. We'll make you as comfortable as possible. It does make a lot of noise. We can give you headphones and ear protection if needed."*- Gregory Capulto, MRI Technologist

In another room the images being taken will appear on a computer screen. The whole exam will last between 20 and 60 minutes. Then you can go home.

*"If your results are normal, you may not need to do anything else, but if the test picks up a problem, you may need additional tests. You should be sure and ask your provider so that they can give you guidance as to additional tests, treatments or any other follow up that you may need."*- Dr. Aaron Hattaway, MD, Radiologist