

Learning About Your MRI Test

An MRI—or magnetic resonance imaging—is a test that uses a magnetic field and pulses of energy to make detailed pictures of the inside of your body.

It looks at organs or other parts of the body to check for signs of disease or problems like bleeding, infection, or an injury.

An MRI gives doctors more information about a problem seen with other tests, such as an X-ray.

Before the MRI test, let your doctor know if you have any health problems or allergies.

Here's how an MRI is done.

You'll put on a hospital gown or scrubs and take off any jewelry.

To help the doctor see organs or blood vessels more clearly, you may get a dye, called contrast material, through an I.V. tube in the arm.

The dye can make some people have a headache or feel flushed or sick to their stomach.

The MRI machine is loud.

So you'll probably get earplugs or headphones that play music.

You'll need to hold still during the test.

So the doctor may give medicines to help you relax and feel sleepy.

The test may take up to an hour.

You'll lie down on a table that slides into the MRI machine.

You may feel air blowing from a fan and hear loud tapping, thumping, or snapping noises.

The part of the body being imaged may feel warm.

Depending on the reason for the MRI, you may go home right after the test.

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If you got medicines to help you relax or lie still, you may need to wait an hour or two before going home, so the medicines can wear off.

Or you may need an adult friend or family member who will drive you home.

If a dye was used for the test, make sure to drink plenty of fluids to help flush out the dye, unless your doctor says not to.

Getting an MRI might seem scary at first.

But it's safe and doesn't hurt—it might help to remember that.

And hospital staff will be there the whole time to make sure you're safe and comfortable.