

## Imaging

# Having an MRI scan

## Information for patients, relatives and carers

This leaflet tells you more about MRI scans, how to prepare for them and what will happen at your appointment. Please feel free to ask our team any questions.

## What is an MRI scan?

MRI stands for magnetic resonance imaging. This scan uses magnets and radiofrequency waves to make images of a part of your body. The radio waves bounce back to a scanner when they reach your body. Then a computer in the scanner uses these radiofrequency waves to make the images.

## Why do I need an MRI?

Your doctor thinks that you should have an MRI scan. The reason for this will depend on your condition and your doctor should have explained this to you.

## What are the risks and benefits of having an MRI?

The benefit of an MRI is that it is a safe and relatively quick procedure. It gives your doctors detailed information about a part of your body.

There are no known risks or side effects associated with MRIs. However, you must tell us if any of the items listed below apply to you, as this could affect your MRI. The radiographer doing your scan will be happy to answer any questions you have.

## Is there anything I need to do before my MRI?

Please contact us **before** your appointment (using the information on page 3) if you:

- have had a recent MRI at another hospital outside of Imperial College NHS Trust
- have a **cardiac pacemaker/ defibrillator**
- have a **cerebral (brain) aneurysm clip**
- have a **cochlear implant** (for hearing), a **neurostimulator** or a **programmable shunt**
- have an adhesive **glucose monitor** (worn on your arm)
- have ever had **metal fragments in your eyes**
- weigh **more than 114kg** (18st)
- are **pregnant** or **breastfeeding**

We try to avoid doing scans on pregnant women in the first three months of pregnancy. Please tell your doctor and the radiographer if you are pregnant or think you may be before the scan.

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## Are there any alternatives to this test?

Your doctor has asked for you to have an MRI because they think it is the best way to find out more about your condition.

Other tests like ultrasound and CT scanning might not be able to give your doctor the information they need.

## How to prepare for the appointment

Unless your appointment letters says not to, you can eat and drink as normal and take any regular medication you need.

## What happens on the day of my appointment?

Please check your appointment letter and follow the instructions on how to get to your appointment. Go to the reception desk. The receptionist will ask you to fill in an MRI safety form. This is because there are magnets in the room that can affect certain metallic fragments and implants. Then the radiographer can check if the test might affect anything.

We will ask you to change into a hospital gown and remove any hearing aids, dentures and all your jewellery, including body piercings and watches. The radiographer will check your details then take you into the scanning room.

The scanner makes quite a loud noise during the procedure. We can give you headphones and/or ear plugs if you want them. In some departments, you can bring a CD to listen to during the scan. Some imaging departments also have access to the internet, so you can listen to something specific on YouTube or the radio.

We will ask you to lie down on the scanning table. We'll put a special piece of equipment around the area of your body we're scanning. This is called a receiver coil and it collects the returning radio waves to make the images. The table will then slide into the scanner, which is shaped like a small tunnel). The part of your body we are scanning will be in the middle of the scanner.

It is very important that you keep still during the scans, so we will try to make you as comfortable as possible. If you don't stay still, we might not get clear images.

MRI scans can be different depending on what kind you are having. Please contact us if you want to know more about how long your scan will take.

### **Contrast medium**

We may also need to take some images using a special dye (known as contrast medium). This will help us see particular parts of your body better. If you need this, we will use a small needle to put a thin tube (called a cannula) in your hand or arm. Then we will inject the dye through the tube. The dye is safe and usually has no side effects, but a small number of people might experience nausea and/or vomiting immediately after the injection. If this happens, we can take a short break then continue with the test.

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## What happens afterwards?

Once the radiologist and/or radiographer are satisfied that the images show all the information they need, you will be able to get dressed and go home. You can eat and drink normally and will get the results of your MRI at your next clinic appointment.

If we give you a contrast injection, please drink plenty of water after your scan for the next 24 to 48 hours.

## How do I get to the hospital?

Please visit the Trust's website for more information about travelling to our hospitals:

[www.imperial.nhs.uk/our-locations](http://www.imperial.nhs.uk/our-locations)

## What if I'm not available for my appointment?

Please contact us as soon as possible. We can then offer this date to another patient and book a new appointment date and time for you.

You will find the right telephone number on your appointment letter.

## Contact details

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any queries or concerns:

- **Imaging Department, Hammersmith Hospital:** Du Cane Road, London W12 0HS  
Telephone: **020 3313 0077**
- **Mansfield Centre for Innovation, Hammersmith Hospital:** Du Cane Road, London W12  
OHS Telephone: **020 3313 3298**
- **Imaging Department, Charing Cross Hospital:** Fulham Palace Road, London W6 8RF  
Telephone: **020 3313 0077**
- **Imaging Department, St Mary's Hospital:** Praed Street, London W2 1NY  
Telephone: **020 3312 7626**
- **Imaging Department, Wembley Community Diagnostic Centre:** 116 Chaplin Road,  
London HA0 4UZ  
Telephone: **020 3704 8540**

## How do I give feedback about my visit?

We want to hear your **suggestions** or **comments**. Your feedback helps us provide the best service. You can always speak to a member of staff.

You can also contact the **patient advice and liaison service (PALS)** on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 to 16.00, Monday to Friday excluding bank holidays) or email at [imperial.pals@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.pals@nhs.net). The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or questions and they can help solve problems.

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You can make a complaint by ringing **020 3312 1337 / 1349** or emailing **ICHC-[tr.Complaints@nhs.net](mailto:tr.Complaints@nhs.net)**. The address is Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street, London W2 1NY.

## Other ways to read this leaflet

Please email us at [imperial.communications@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.communications@nhs.net) if you need this leaflet in a different format. This could be large print, Easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in a different language.

## Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: [www.imperial.nhs.uk](http://www.imperial.nhs.uk)

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