Imaging department

Having an MRI small bowel scan

Information for patients

Introduction
This leaflet tells you more about MRI scans. Please feel free to ask our team any questions you have about the information below.

What is an MRI scan?
MRI stands for magnetic resonance imaging. This technique uses magnetism and radiofrequency waves to collect information about the part of the body being examined. The radio waves are bounced back to the scanner by your body and a computer within the scanner uses this information to produce images (pictures).

Why do I need an MRI?
Your doctor has recommended that you have an MRI Small Bowel. The reason for this will depend upon your particular condition and will have been discussed with you in clinic.

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, which gives your doctors detailed information about the area being examined. There are no known risks or side effects associated with this test. However, you must tell us if any of the items listed below apply to you, as this could affect your MRI. The radiographer performing the scan will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Are there any alternatives to this test?
An MRI will only have been requested by your doctor if he/she feels that this is the best way to find out more information about your condition. Other tests such as ultrasound and CT scanning can also give information, but MRI often gives a better quality of information than other methods.
Is there anything I need to do before my MRI?
When confirming your appointment, please tell us if you have:

- a heart pacemaker
- aneurysm clips
- had brain or spinal surgery in the past
- had any surgery involving metal implants, such as hip replacements
- a previous history of metal fragments in your eyes

or if you weigh more than 114kg (18st), as we may need to make alternative arrangements for your appointment.

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

Please also tell us if you have had a recent MRI at another hospital.

What if I cannot keep my appointment?
Please contact us as soon as possible. We can then offer this date to another patient and agree a new appointment date and time with you.

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

How do I get to the hospital?
You are advised to travel, if possible, by public transport when visiting our hospitals. Car parking is severely limited and you may find it very difficult to find a place to park near the hospital.

The nearest tube stations for **Hammersmith Hospital** are East Acton and White City (both on the Central Line) and Wood Lane (Hammersmith & City Line). Buses that stop outside the hospital are numbers 7, 70, 72, 272 and 283.

The nearest tube stations for **Charing Cross Hospital** are Hammersmith (District, Piccadilly and Hammersmith & City lines) and Barons Court (District and Piccadilly lines). Buses that stop outside the hospital are numbers 190, 211, 220 and 295.

The nearest tube stations for **St Mary's Hospital** are Paddington Mainline Station, while Paddington and Edgware Road tube stations are about five minutes’ walk away. St Mary’s Hospital is served by bus routes 7, 23, 27, 36, 205, 332 and 436.

What happens on the day of my appointment?
Please do not eat any solid food for 4 hours before your arrival time. You may drink water or fruit juice.
Please follow the instruction on your appointment letter to arrive at the correct location for your examination. The receptionist will ask you to fill in an MRI safety form. This is because certain metallic fragments and implants are affected by the magnetism in the room. The radiographer will need to check if you have any implants and whether they could be affected by the magnetism.

When you arrive we will ask you to drink a liquid which increases the visibility of your small bowel on the scan. This liquid has a laxative effect which may last for approximately 2-4 hours after drinking it, so you may need to stay near a toilet for a while after your scan. After about 50 minutes you will be asked to change into a gown and remove all your jewellery, including body piercings and watches.

You will then have a small cannula inserted into a vein in your arm. This is to allow us to give you a medication (called ‘Buscopan’) that will reduce the natural movement of your small bowel to allow clear and also a special dye or ‘contrast medium’ which will cause your small bowel to ‘highlight’ on the images. (Buscopan may have the after-effect of causing blurred vision for a short while. This wears off fairly quickly, but please ensures that your vision has returned to normal before attempting to drive a motor vehicle.

The scanner makes quite a loud noise during the procedure and so we can give you headphones or ear plugs to wear to reduce this.

You will be asked to lie down on the scanning table. Your abdomen and pelvis will be surrounded by a special piece of equipment called a ‘receiver coil’ (the part of the scanner which collects the returning radio waves to make the images). The table will then slide into the scanner (which is shaped like a small tunnel) so that the part of your body to be scanned is in the middle. The scan will last approximately 15 minutes. During the scan you are required to keep still and follow some simple instructions.

It is very important that you keep still during the scans, so we will try to make you as comfortable as possible.

An MRI scan usually takes approximately 15 to 30 minutes to complete, however because of the preparations for this scan please allow for at least 2 hours to be spent in the department.

What happens afterwards?

Once the radiologist and/or radiographer is satisfied that the images show all the information required, you will be able to get dressed and go home. The liquid that you drank before the scan has a laxative effect which may last for approximately 2-4 hours, so you may need to stay near a toilet for a while after your scan. It is advised to avoid eating solid food for about an hour afterwards but you can drink fluids immediately if you wish. You will be able to get the results of your MRI at your next clinic appointment.
Contact details

Please do not hesitate to contact our imaging departments if you have any queries or concerns:

- **Hammersmith Hospital**: Du Cane Road, London W12 0HS  
  Telephone: 020 3313 3389

- **Charing Cross Hospital**: Fulham Palace Road, London W6 8RF  
  Telephone: 020 3311 1863

- **St Mary's Hospital**: Praed Street, London W2 1NY  
  Telephone: 020 3312 6418

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any suggestions or comments about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (PALS) on 020 3313 0088 (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte’s & Chelsea hospitals), or 020 3312 7777 (St Mary’s and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at pals@imperial.nhs.uk. The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to express your concerns in writing to:

Complaints department  
Fourth floor  
Salton House  
St Mary’s Hospital  
Praed Street  
London W2 1NY

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print, as a sound recording, in Braille, or in alternative languages. Please contact the communications team on 020 3312 5592.

Wi-fi

We have a free and premium wi-fi service at each of our five hospitals. Look for WiFiSPARK_FREE or WiFiSPARK_PREMIUM.