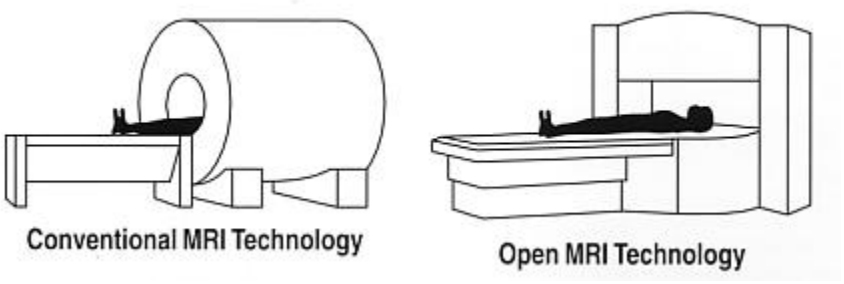
Frequently Asked Questions

What is an MRI? MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) is a painless diagnostic procedure that uses a large magnet, radio waves and a computer to create detailed images of the internal structure of the body. This procedure is an advanced method of imaging for information regarding soft tissue between muscle, fat vessels, tendons, ligaments, cartilage, cortical bone and marrow bone space.

What is the difference between an open MRI and a conventional closed MRI? For a conventional closed MRI, patients are placed on a table and slid into a narrow, cylindrical tube where the images are taken. It is limited in its capacity to accommodate large and tall patients and can be particularly troublesome for those who are claustrophobic or suffer anxiety in confined spaces. An open MRI solves this problem. It is barrier free, and you are able to see out of all sides and are unlikely to feel trapped or closed in. Patients of all sizes, up to 400 pounds, can fit in the open MRI technology.



What can I expect during my MRI exam? The technologist will talk you through every step. Typically you are positioned on your back, and a special coil is placed on the area of your body being scanned. Some exams may require a contrast agent which is normally injected into your vein to enhance the results. Pillows and blankets are available to keep you as comfortable as possible. Once the exam begins, it is important that you are as still as possible. You will hear "knocking" noises and the hum of the machine. This is all normal and you will be able to talk to the technologist during your procedure. You will also be able to listen to our CD music or you may bring you favorite CD or iPod.

How long does it take? The exam usually takes between 30 and 60 minutes. If your doctor orders your MRI exam with contrast, the exam may take longer to complete.

What is contrast? In some cases, your doctor may order your test with contrast. This is a fluid that is injected into a vein (usually in your arm). This helps to make certain details on the exam clearer and is routine for certain MRI exams.

Is there any risk? MRI is very safe. There are no health risks associated with the magnetic field or the radio waves used by the machine nor have any side effects been reported.

May I have an MRI exam when I am pregnant or breastfeeding? While an MRI scan has no known side effects, it is not recommended for pregnant women unless it is medically indicated. If you are breastfeeding and have contrast as part of your exam, please suspend nursing for 24 hours after the exam.

Why is the scanner so noisy? The scanner works with strong magnetic fields which builds up energy. The energy is released as loud knocking sounds.

What should I wear? You should dress comfortably wearing clothing that has no metals. You may be asked to change into a patient gown, but if you are wearing sweats or clothing without any sort of metal, you may not be asked to change.

What is MRI?

MRI or Magnetic Resonance Imaging is a way to look inside your body without the use of X-rays. It is completely painless. MRI can allow your doctor to see certain types of tissue and can provide very important information about the brain, spine, joints and internal organs. MRI can allow your physician the opportunity for early detection of disease or injuries so proper treatment may be started as soon as possible.

How does MRI work?

Your body is composed of atoms. Water or hydrogen atoms make up 95% of the human body. Usually the hydrogen atoms within the body spin at random. When you have an MRI, you are placed in a strong magnetic field that is up to 8,000 times stronger than that of the earth, which causes these atoms to realign and spin all in the same direction. Like CT, MRI acquires images that are a "slice" of anatomy. Using the magnetic fields and radio waves, remarkably detailed cross-sectional images of the body can be obtained. A computer processes these images to produce detailed pictures of the anatomy.

Can anyone have an MRI?

Because some metals interfere with the function of the MRI equipment, certain patients are not able to have an MRI exam. The following equipment or conditions may create problems with an MRI. Please call with concerns about any of the following metals in your body.

- A pacemaker or pacing wires
- Metal fragments in one or both eyes
- Inner ear implants
- Cerebral aneurysm clips
- Implanted neuro stimulator
- Certain metal implants

What will happen during the MRI exam?

You will be asked to lie down on the examination table on your back. The table will slide smoothly into the opening, and you will be positioned either head first or feet first, depending on the type of exam.

What if I feel anxious or claustrophobic?

One of the first things we recommend to anyone who thinks they might feel anxious or claustrophobic during an exam is an advanced trip to our facility to actually look at the scanner. We often find that once patients see how wide the opening is and how short the scanner is, their anxiety is eliminated. Remember, MRI scanners have changed dramatically over the last 10 years, and are no longer made with such small, restrictive openings and long "tubes" or "tunnels".

Our technologists are very skilled at helping you feel relaxed and comfortable during your exam. It often helps to listen to music during your exam. You may have a family member in the room with you if you desire. In very rare instances, a patient may require sedation, which must be scheduled ahead.