Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) Scans

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Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) Scans

Patient Information

Radiology Department

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Introduction

If the information within this leaflet does not answer your questions, please contact the Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) Suite where a Radiographer will be pleased to help you:

Telephone: 0300 707 8675, Monday to Friday 8:30am to 5pm

Please pay attention to your appointment letter. Your scan may be performed at either Wigan Royal Albert Edward Infirmary, Wrightington Hospital or Leigh Infirmary. If you attend the wrong site, you will likely be turned away without a scan.

If you have had any of the following, we may have to defer your scan until we gather more information about your medical history:

- Heart pacemaker, loop recorder, implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD)
- Artificial heart valve
- Intra-cranial vessel clips/coils
- A possibility of pregnancy
- Metal splinters/fragments in eyes or body

- Gastric band
- Internal electronic devices

Please contact MRI appointments on receipt of your appointment on 0300 707 8675 if any of the above apply to you.

What is an MRI scanner?

An MRI scanner is a complex imaging machine containing a large open-ended tube. It is used to help diagnose disease and injury. An MRI Radiographer will perform your scan; these Radiographers are highly skilled health care professionals who perform all types of diagnostic imaging.

How does it work?

MRI uses powerful magnets and radio waves to align protons in the body. Each proton produces a signal which is read by a receiver. This information is converted by a complex computer technology to create detailed pictures of the inside of your body.

Is it safe?

MRI scanners use powerful magnetic fields and therefore do not use x-rays. They are safe for most people however some people with certain magnetic or electronic objects in or on them cannot be scanned.

What does it show?

An MRI scanner produces detailed pictures of your body in a cross section, rather like cutting a tree to view its rings. It can create images from front to back, top to bottom and side to side.

How long does a scan take?

An average scan takes about 20-30 minutes, but this will vary from patient to patient depending on what is being scanned. You will also need to answer some safety questions and change into a gown before your scan. Plan to be with us for about 90 minutes in total to allow us to perform extra scans on you if needed.

We may have to accommodate emergency cases that will need to be scanned out of turn. This may mean you have to wait a little longer than anticipated. Please allow for extra time on your parking ticket.

Before your scan

On your arrival you will be asked some questions to make sure it is safe to scan you. You will be asked to change into a hospital gown, take off any jewellery and lock any valuables, electronic devices or metal objects in a secure locker. The Radiographers will fully explain the procedure.

During your scan

Depending on the area being scanned you may enter the scanner feet first or head first.

You will need to lie very still throughout the scan. If you move it may be necessary to repeat a section of the scan, this means you will be in the scanner longer. Some scans may require you to hold your breath for a few seconds.

MRI scans can be noisy (repetitive knocking sounds) you will be given headphones or earplugs to reduce the noise of the scanner to an acceptable level. It is possible to play music to you if you wish. Most patients listen to the local radio station.

You will be given a contact buzzer in case you feel you need to speak to the Radiographer during your scan or to stop the scan for any reason.

Will I need an injection?

Depending on your condition an injection may be required to provide clearer pictures. This will give the Radiologist extra information in order to provide a full and comprehensive report on your scan. It may be an MRI contrast dye (Gadolinium) to highlight the blood supply to the organs, and/or a muscle relaxant to settle bowel movement obscuring an area of interest.

If an injection is required, it will usually be given by a Radiographer into a vein in the arm. There are no major adverse side effects – however you may be required to stay in the department for up to 30 mins after the injection.

After your scan

The Radiologist will need to study your scans carefully to make the diagnosis. They will produce a written report of their findings, which will be sent to the doctor who referred you for the scan.

Are there any side effects?

There are no known adverse side effects from a clinical MRI. You can continue to take any medication as normal.

Will it hurt?

No, MRI scans are painless. If your condition makes it difficult to lie flat and still during your scan, the Radiographers will do their best to make you as comfortable as possible.

Is it claustrophobic?

You will be required to lie in the centre of the scanner (magnet). It is open ended and brightly lit. About 1% of patients may feel claustrophobic during their scan. However, the Radiographers are skilled at putting you at ease and making you as comfortable as possible.

Many patients find the experience very relaxing.

Relatives and Escorts

You can bring a relative or friend with you to the Radiology Department, however they will not normally be allowed in the examination room.

Children/Vulnerable Adults

Please be aware that the department does not have the facilities to supervise children/vulnerable adults. If you need to bring a child or vulnerable adult with you, you must bring an appropriate adult to supervise them whilst you are having the examination.

Interpreters

If you require an interpreter, please contact the department before your appointment so that this can be arranged. (Please Note: Hospital policy states that relatives cannot act as interpreters).

What does the scanner look like?



What if I am unable to attend?

The average missed outpatient appointment costs the NHS £160.

If you cannot attend your appointment, please contact the MRI Suite so that we can offer your appointment to somebody else. We will be glad to offer you an alternative appointment and will try our best to accommodate you at a date and time suitable to

you.

Please allow plenty of time to park your car. If you are running late, please let us know.



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