

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Undergoing an MRI scan

The aim of this leaflet is to tell you what you can expect when you come for your MRI scan.

What is MRI?

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) is a technique for producing images of various parts of the body.

How does an MRI scanner work?

The MRI scanner is a specialised machine which uses a large magnet, radio waves, receiver coil and a computer to produce a cross-sectional image of the body.

Do I need to do anything before the scan?

It is most important that you have filled in your safety questionnaire and contacted the department if you have answered “yes” to any of the relevant questions.

Do I need to bring anything?

- You need to bring your completed safety questionnaire.
- If you wear or bring metal-free clothing, you may not need to change into a gown.
- Lockers are provided for your belongings, but you are advised to leave any unnecessary valuables at home.
- **Do not** wear heavy eye make-up.

What happens when I arrive?

A radiographer will check your questionnaire and may ask further questions depending on the information provided. You will then be asked to change if necessary.

What if I wear a hearing aid?

Hearing aids are not allowed in the scan room. You may wear your hearing aid until the procedure has been explained and you have had any questions answered, but it **must** be removed before entering the scan room.

Do I need an injection?

Sometimes it is necessary to give you an injection to show the blood vessels around the area being examined. If an injection of a contrast agent is necessary, you will be advised of this at the time.

The injection is given into a vein, usually near the elbow or on the back of the hand.

What happens during the scan?

- You will be asked to lie on the scan table and we will ensure you are as comfortable as possible.
- The table is then positioned in the scanner.
- During the scan it is very important to remain still, as with any imaging, as movement produces blurred images.
- The scanner makes a lot of noise while scanning; patients must wear ear defenders or ear plugs which will be provided for your comfort.
- You will be able to communicate between scans with the radiographer via the ear defenders, which have a two-way microphone attached.

Is MRI painful?

MRI is a painless procedure, although some of the scans may give you a warm feeling.

How long does the scan take?

The average time is about 20 to 30 minutes. However, depending on your particular examination, it may take up to an hour.

What happens after the scan?

When the scan is finished, the radiographer will bring you out of the scanner and you can then get dressed, collect your belongings and leave.

Can I drive after my scan?

If you have had an arthrogram followed by an MRI scan you are not allowed to drive. For all other MRI scans you can drive, even if you have had an injection.

How do I get the results?

The scan results are not available on the day of your examination. All the images produced are reviewed by a consultant radiologist, who is a doctor specialising in reporting this type of scan.

You will then be sent an appointment to see the doctor who organised the scan to discuss the results when they are available.

Are there any risks to having an MRI scan?

You will be given a safety questionnaire to complete to assess and eliminate any risks related to the magnetic field of the scanner.

Sometimes you will require an injection of a small amount of colourless liquid as a contrast agent through a cannula (small plastic tube) inserted into a vein in your arm.

There are no known risks to having an MRI scan after all the safety checks have been made.

The magnetic field is very strong and so it is extremely important that you fill in your safety questionnaire correctly.

If you are given an injection you may get a little bruising at the injection site. This bruising will disappear in a few days.

Side-effects to the contrast agent injected are very rare.

Common mild reactions to MRI contrast (Gadolinium) are hives and itchy eyes. These can be easily controlled and you should report these to your GP if they occur.

Severe reactions are very rare. Nephrogenic Systemic Fibrosis (NSF), which is thickening of various tissues, is well documented.

Very rarely the contrast medium may affect your kidney function. If you already have altered kidney function, blood tests are arranged before and after the scan to minimise the risk of this happening.

Some contrast agents may accumulate in various tissues and the radiologists bear this in mind while advising the test.

Rarely, the contrast may leak out from a vein and cause localised swelling and redness at the site. This is usually minor but will be managed and advice given to you at the time.

Will I be kept waiting?

We try to keep to appointment times. However, emergency and ward patients are scanned without an appointment, which may cause your scan to be delayed.

If this situation arises, you will be informed of the approximate delay time. If waiting in the department becomes inconvenient for you, we will be happy to offer you an alternative appointment time.

What if I still have some questions about the scan?

If you have any questions, or want more information about your MRI scan, please ask when you come to the hospital.

Should you have any queries that must be answered before this, please contact the MRI Department on telephone (01623) 622515, extension 6190.

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you. External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them. If you require a full list of references (if relevant) for this leaflet, please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

To be completed by the Communications office
Leaflet code: PIL202403-06-UMRIS
Created: November 2015 / Revised: March 2024 /
Review Date: March 2026