

Patient information leaflet

MRI Breast scan

Radiology department

Introduction

We hope this guide will answer your questions about your MRI Breast scan. Please contact the team if you require further information via the details at the end of this leaflet.

What is an MRI Breast scan?

An MRI breast scan uses Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) to produce pictures of the breast tissue and area around the armpit (axilla). It is a non-invasive procedure that is used to have a detailed look at the breast tissue.

The uses of breast MRI include:

- Screening of high-risk patients
- Local staging of breast cancer
- Evaluation of treatment response
- Breast implant evaluation (This scan does not normally require an injection of contrast).

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) is a large tube which is open at both ends. It uses a strong magnetic field and radio waves to produce detailed pictures of the inside of your body. Using a computer, this information is then converted into a picture.

MRI scanners use powerful magnetic fields and metal items can distort MRI images and may be a safety hazard if they become attracted to the magnetic field.

Why do I need an MRI scan?

You are having this examination as it will help your doctor to decide on the cause of your symptoms. This procedure will give clearer information to the clinicians treating you.

When shouldn't you have a scan?

If you have a pacemaker or any other programmable implants in your body, we will **not** be able to scan you at this trust.

Please contact the MRI department if you have any implants, have recently ingested a pill camera, have jewellery or body piercings that you cannot remove, or have metallic foreign bodies inside you, such as shrapnel or bullets. Patients with fillings, crowns or dental implants can be scanned, but please contact the department if you have fixed braces on your teeth.

What are the associated risks of an MRI scan?

MRI facilities have strict safety and screening procedures in place.

At present, there is no conclusive evidence that exposure to the magnetic field of the MRI scanner poses any risk or side effects.



Patients aged 12-55 years of age; To date, there has been no indication that the use of clinical MRI Imaging during pregnancy has produced any detrimental effects. However, as noted by the Royal College of Radiologists, the safety of MR Imaging during pregnancy has not yet been proven. The decision to proceed with your MRI scan would need to be made by referring clinician, MR radiologist and yourself / the patient.

Breastfeeding: On the day of your MRI examination, you may be given an injection of MRI contrast medium (Gadolinium). These agents are low risk contrast agents. A very small percentage of the injected contrast enters the breast milk but virtually none is absorbed across the gut of the infant.

No special precautions are required and you can carry on breastfeeding as normal. However, if you have any concerns you may want to express some breast milk prior to your appointment.

Will I need an injection?

An MRI sometimes requires an injection of a special dye (contrast media) into a vein in the arm or hand via a cannula, and it is eliminated from the body through the kidneys. This is administered to patients at the request of a radiologist (a specialist radiology doctor) to help enhance certain areas of your body.

Occasionally this may cause an extravasation, which is a swelling around the injection site on the arm, where some of the contrast media has seeped into the tissues.

Allergic reactions to contrast medium are possible, but rare, and can usually be treated immediately.

Our radiology staff are trained to deal with these complications if they arise.

Preparing for your procedure

It is essential that you read through the safety questionnaire as soon as you receive it. This questionnaire does **not** need to be printed, but you **must** contact us if you answer **yes** to **any** of the questions. This will avoid any complications or delays in your treatment.

If you are unable to complete the safety questionnaire or answer these questions, a next of kin / guardian can complete this on your behalf if they have full knowledge of your medical history. Please ensure the carer/ guardian attending with you to your appointment is also knowledgeable of your medical history as the Radiographers will need to confirm the answers to this safety questionnaire when you attend on the day.

Please contact the booking team before your appointment if:

- you weigh over 23 stone/146 kilograms so we can make sure you are booked for the most appropriate scanner
- you are or may be pregnant
- you plan on using hospital transport or need a hoist to transfer
you require an interpreter – please inform us as soon as you receive your appointment letter, and we will arrange an interpreter for you.

You can eat and drink as normal prior to your scan.

Medication

Please continue to take all medications as usual prior to your MRI scan.



Getting to us

Please check which hospital your appointment is at. Below are the addresses for The Princess Alexandra Hospital in Harlow and St. Margaret's Hospital in Epping.

If you are attending The Princess Alexandra Hospital (Hamstel Road, Harlow, Essex, CM20 1QX), follow the signage to the radiology reception, which is located on the ground floor, in the green zone. Please let the receptionists know that you have arrived for your appointment.

If you are attending St. Margaret's Hospital (The Plain, Epping, Essex, CM16 6TN), follow the signage to the radiology reception, which is located by the blood test department. Please let the receptionists know that you have arrived for your appointment.

When should I arrive?

Please arrive in radiology department at your given appointment time. A notification through text or letter should have been sent to you to confirm this appointment.

Can someone stay with me in hospital?

You may have a friend or family member attend with you, but they will be asked to stay in the waiting area while you have your procedure.

Children are not allowed in the waiting area unattended. Our staff are not permitted to supervise children, so please ensure child care arrangements are in place to avoid your tests being rescheduled.

The day of the procedure

On the day of the procedure, the radiographer (the person who operates the MRI scanner) will explain the procedure to you and check through your safety questionnaire and answer any questions you may have.

Before entering the scan room, you will be asked to remove any loose objects/items on you and make sure your pockets are empty.

This includes items such as watches, jewellery, all body piercings, hairpins, keys, coins and mobile phones. You should also remove any wigs, metal dentures, and hearing aids you are wearing.

You may be asked to change into metal-free clothing and put on a hospital gown. Secure lockers are provided for your clothes and valuables.

The procedure

You will be asked to lie face down on the scanning table on your tummy/stomach, so that your breasts are positioned in the openings of 'receiving device' that picks up the images.

The radiographers will try to make you as comfortable as possible. You must keep very still for the scan to avoid blurring the images.

You will be given ear protection to wear during the scan, as MRI scanners make a series of loud noises. This noise is due to the small magnets in the machines being turned on and off. You will also be given a call button to hold during the scan. This button should only be pressed if you need to stop the scan.

The scanning table is then moved into the scanner ready to begin the scan.

An MRI scan is painless and the exam typically takes 15 to 60 minutes.

If contrast is required this will be administered by the radiographer during the scan.



After the procedure

If you have a canula in your arm, this will be removed before you are discharged from the department, you are then able to continue with your normal activities.

Can I drive after my procedure?

You are able to drive as soon as you are discharged from the department.

How soon can I return to work?

You are able to return to work as soon as discharged from the department.

When will I get my results?

You will not know the results of your examination immediately. The radiologist will report their findings to the clinician who arranged your procedure, who will discuss the results with you. It usually takes a couple of weeks for the results to become available.

What is a recall and why may I need one?

A recall is when the radiologist has looked at your previous images from your scan and would like further images to aid diagnosis. We may therefore, need to send you a further appointment to attend the MRI department.

Please do not be concerned, as radiologists cannot always be present to view and check the images at the time of your initial scan.

Contacting the team

If you have any further questions about your MRI scan or an existing appointment, please contact the radiology department (**Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm**) on; **01279 827179** and press option 1 for radiology appointments and then option 3 for MRI.

If you have any queries **outside of working hours (after 4pm and on weekends)**, you will be redirected to the main radiology reception.

Please note appointment bookings cannot be made during this time.

Your feedback matters

If you would like to give feedback on your care, please contact our patient experience team at paht.pals@nhs.net or **01279 827211**.

Please contact the communications team at paht.communications@nhs.net if you would like this leaflet in another language or format.

