

Breast MRI

Introduction

Magnetic resonance imaging is called MRI for short. It detects the size and location of tumors. The machine is a large, donut-shaped magnet. Breast MRI is used after a mammogram if more detail is needed. This can happen if the doctor thinks there may be disease that the mammogram cannot detect. The breast MRI can be used instead of a mammogram for women who have dense breast tissue. It can be used after a mammogram if the doctor wants more detail.

You **cannot** have a breast MRI if you have:

- A breast tissue expander.
- A cardiac pace maker.

You **may not be able to** have a breast MRI if you have metal objects in the body. Examples are surgical clips in the brain or shrapnel. The metal object or device could shift from its place or malfunction as a result of the strong magnetic field of the scanner. Ask the MRI staff if you are not sure.

For the breast MRI, you will lie on your stomach. Your breast(s) will be in a molded cut-out. They are held in place with compression paddles. The compression is not as tight or uncomfortable as it is with a mammogram. For many women, the most difficult part of the exam is lying with their arms over their head or at their sides for up to 25 minutes. While you are in the machine, you cannot move because movement blurs the images. About halfway through the MRI, you will be taken out of the machine so that contrast media can be injected through your intravenous line. You must remain still, but if you are very uncomfortable, ask the technician to hold your back so that you can move your arms or neck a bit. Once you are in the machine again, you must lie perfectly still until the MRI is complete.

Preparation

- If you are getting medicine through a patch on your skin, remove it before entering the MRI suite. This is because any metal on the patch can heat up and cause burns during the MRI. Many patches have metal, some do not. Because we cannot know all products, we have made it our policy that any patch must be removed for your safety. Bring an extra patch with you to put on after the MRI. A Fentanyl patch does not need to be removed. It is the only exception to our policy.
- Ask your doctor ahead of time to prescribe medicine:
 - if you will find it hard to lie still in an enclosed area.
 - if it will be uncomfortable for you to lie on your stomach with your arms stretched above your head for 25 minutes.
- No other special preparation is required. You may eat, drink, and take your normal medicine(s) as usual.

Time

The exam takes up to 25 minutes, regardless if one or both breasts are imaged.

Procedure

- Wear clothes that do not have any metal, such as zippers, snaps, or metal buttons. You will need to take off your jewelry, watch, and bra.
- You will be able to store your belongings in a locker provided for you.
- Do not take any card with a magnetic strip (such as a credit card or a MetroCard_{SM}) into the MRI machine. They may not work once exposed to the magnetic field.
- Before your breast MRI, the procedure will be explained to you. Any questions you have will be answered.
- An intravenous line (IV) will be placed in a vein to give you an injection of a contrast medium. The contrast makes it possible to see any abnormality in the breast. The IV will be taken out at the end of your procedure.
- You may request earphones so that you can listen to music. Or, you can have earplugs to reduce the clicking sound you will hear from the MRI machine.
- You will be able to talk with the technologist at any time during the MRI. If you become very uncomfortable in the MRI machine, say so.

After the Procedure

- The IV site will be covered with Band-Aid[®].
- A report of the scan will be sent to your doctor within a few days after your test.

